Walter Pater

Plato and Platonism

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A Series of Lectures

Walter Pater

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Chapter One

Plato and the Doctrine of Motion

WITH the world of intellectual production, as with that of organic generation, nature makes no sudden starts. *Natura nihil facit per saltum*; and in the history of philosophy there are no absolute beginnings. Fix where we may the origin of this or that doctrine or idea, the doctrine of "reminiscence," for instance, or of "the perpetual flux," the theory of "induction," or the philosophic view of things generally, the specialist will still be able to find us some earlier anticipation of that doctrine, that mental tendency. The most elementary act of mental analysis takes time to do; the most rudimentary sort of speculative knowledge, abstractions so simple that we can hardly conceive the human mind without them, must grow, and with difficulty. Philosophy itself, mental and moral, has its preparation, its forethoughts, in the poetry that preceded it. A powerful generalisation thrown into some salient phrase, such as that of Heraclitus—Πάντα ῥεῖ, all things fleet away—may startle a particular age by its novelty, but takes possession only because all along its root was somewhere among the natural though but half-developed instincts of the human mind itself.

Plato has seemed to many to have been scarcely less than the creator of philosophy; and it is an immense advance he makes, from the crude or turbid beginnings of scientific enquiry with the Ionians or the Eleatics, to that wide range of perfectly finished philosophical literature. His encyclopaedic view of the whole domain of knowledge is more than a mere step in a progress. Nothing that went before it, for compass and power and charm, had been really comparable to it. Plato's achievement may well seem an absolutely fresh thing in the morning of the mind's history. Yet in truth the world Plato had entered into was already

almost weary of philosophical debate, bewildered by the oppositions of sects, the claims of rival schools. Language and the processes of thought were already become sophisticated, the very air he breathed sickly with off-cast speculative atoms.

In the *Timaeus*, dealing with the origin of the universe he figures less as the author of a new theory, than as already an eclectic critic of older ones, himself somewhat perplexed by theory and counter-theory. And as we find there a sort of storehouse of all physical theories, so in reading the *Parmenides* we might think that all metaphysical questions whatever had already passed through the mind of Plato. Some of the results of patient earlier thinkers, even then dead and gone, are of the structure of his philosophy. They are everywhere in it, not as the stray carved corner of some older edifice, to be found here or there amid the new, but rather like minute relics of earlier organic life in the very stone he builds with. The central and most intimate principles of his teaching challenge us to go back beyond them, not merely to his own immediate, somewhat enigmatic master—to Socrates, who survives chiefly in his pages—but to various precedent schools of speculative thought, in Greece, in Ionia, in Italy; beyond these into that age of poetry, in which the first efforts of philosophic apprehension had hardly understood themselves; beyond that unconscious philosophy, again, to certain constitutional tendencies, persuasions, forecasts of the intellect itself, such as had given birth, it would seem, to thoughts akin to Plato's in the older civilisations of India and of Egypt, as they still exercise their authority over ourselves.

The thoughts of Plato, like the language he has to use (we find it so again, in turn, with those predecessors of his, when we pass from him to them) are covered with the traces of previous labour and have had their earlier proprietors. If at times we become aware in reading him of certain anticipations of modern knowledge, we are also quite obviously among the relics of an older, a poetic or half-visionary world. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that in Plato, in spite of his wonderful savour of literary freshness, there is nothing absolutely new: or rather, as in many other very original products of human genius, the seemingly new is old also, a

palimpsest, a tapestry of which the actual threads have served before, or like the animal frame itself, every particle of which has already lived and died many times over. Nothing but the life-giving principle of cohesion is new; the new perspective, the resultant complexion, the expressiveness which familiar thoughts attain by novel juxtaposition. In other words, the *form* is new. But then, in the creation of philosophical literature, as in all other products of art, *form*, in the full signification of that word, is everything, and the mere matter is nothing.

There are three different ways in which the criticism of philosophic, of all speculative opinion whatever, may be conducted. The doctrines of Plato's *Republic*, for instance, may be regarded as so much truth or falsehood, to be accepted or rejected as such by the student of today. That is the dogmatic method of criticism; judging every product of human thought, however alien or distant from one's self, by its congruity with the assumptions of Bacon or Spinoza, of Mill or Hegel, according to the mental preference of the particular critic. There is, secondly, the more generous, eclectic or syncretic method, which aims at a selection from contending schools of the various grains of truth dispersed among them. It is the method which has prevailed in periods of large reading but with little inceptive force of their own, like that of the Alexandrian Neo-Platonism in the third century, or the Neo-Platonism of Florence in the fifteenth. Its natural defect is in the tendency to misrepresent the true character of the doctrine it professes to explain, that it may harmonise thus the better with the other elements of a pre-conceived system.

Dogmatic and eclectic criticism alike have in our own century, under the influence of Hegel and his predominant theory of the ever-changing "Time-spirit" or *Zeitgeist*, given way to a third method of criticism, the historic method, which bids us replace the doctrine, or the system, we are busy with, or such an ancient monument of philosophic thought as *The Republic*, as far as possible in the group of conditions, intellectual, social, material, amid which it was actually produced, if we would really understand it. That ages have their genius as well as the individual; that in every age there is a peculiar *ensemble* of conditions which determines a

common character in every product of that age, in business and art, in fashion and speculation, in religion and manners, in men's very faces; that nothing man has projected from himself is really intelligible except at its own date, and from its proper point of view in the never-resting "secular process;" the solidarity of philosophy, of the intellectual life, with common or general history; that what it behoves the student of philosophic systems to cultivate is the "historic sense:" by force of these convictions many a normal, or at first sight abnormal, phase of speculation has found a reasonable meaning for us. As the strangely twisted pine-tree, which would be a freak of nature on an English lawn, is seen, if we replace it, in thought, amid the contending forces of the Alpine torrent that actually shaped its growth, to have been the creature of necessity, of the logic of certain facts; so, beliefs the most fantastic, the "communism" of Plato, for instance, have their natural propriety when duly correlated with those facts, those conditions round about them, of which they are in truth a part.

In the intellectual as in the organic world the given product, its normal or abnormal characteristics, are determined, as people say, by the "environment." The business of the young scholar therefore, in reading Plato, is not to take his side in a controversy, to adopt or refute Plato's opinions, to modify, or make apology for, what may seem erratic or impossible in him; still less, to furnish himself with arguments on behalf of some theory or conviction of his own. His duty is rather to follow intelligently, but with strict indifference, the mental process there, as he might witness a game of skill; better still, as in reading *Hamlet* or *The Divine Comedy*, so in reading *The Republic*, to watch, for its dramatic interest, the spectacle of a powerful, of a sovereign intellect, translating itself, amid a complex group of conditions which can never in the nature of things occur again, at once pliant and resistant to them, into a great literary monument. To put Plato into his natural place, as a result from antecedent and contemporary movements of Greek speculation, of Greek life generally: such is the proper aim of the historic, that is to say, of the really critical study of him.

At the threshold, then, of *The Republic* of Plato, the historic spirit impresses upon us the fact that some of its leading thoughts

are partly derivative from earlier thinkers, of whom we happen to possess independent information. From that brilliant and busy, yet so unconcerned press of early Greek life, one here another there stands aside to make the initial act of conscious philosophic reflexion. It is done with something of the simplicity, the immediate and visible effectiveness, of the visible world in action all around. Among Plato's many intellectual predecessors, on whom in recent years much attention has been bestowed by a host of commentators after the mind of Hegel, three, whose ideas, whose words even, we really find in the very texture of Plato's work, emerge distinctly in close connexion with *The Republic*: Pythagoras, the dim, half-legendary founder of the philosophy of number and music; Parmenides, "My father Parmenides," the centre of the school of Elea; Heraclitus, thirdly, author of the doctrine of "the Perpetual Flux:" three teachers, it must be admitted after all, of whom what knowledge we have is to the utmost degree fragmentary and vague. But then, one way of giving that knowledge greater definiteness is by noting their direct and actual influence in Plato's writings.

Heraclitus, a writer of philosophy in prose, yet of a philosophy which was half poetic figure, half generalised fact, in style crabbed and obscure, but stimulant, invasive, not to be forgotten—he too might be thought, as a writer of prose, one of the "fathers" of Plato. His influence, however, on Plato, though himself a Heraclitean in early life, was by way of antagonism or reaction; Plato's stand against any philosophy of motion becoming, as we say, something of a "fixed idea" with him. Heraclitus of Ephesus (what Ephesus must have been just then is denoted by the fact that it was one of the twelve cities of the Ionian League) died about forty years before Plato was born. Here then at Ephesus, the much frequented centre of the religious life of Ionia, itself so lately emancipated from its tyrants, Heraclitus, of ancient hereditary rank, an aristocrat by birth and temper, amid all the bustle of still undiscredited Greek democracy, had reflected, not to his peace of mind, on the mutable character of political as well as of physical existence; perhaps, early as it was, on the mutability of intellectual systems also, that modes of thought and practice had al-

ready been in and out of fashion. Empires certainly had lived and died around; and in Ephesus as elsewhere, the privileged class had gone to the wall. In this era of unrestrained youthfulness, of Greek youthfulness, one of the haughtiest of that class, as being also of nature's aristocracy, and a man of powerful intellectual gifts, Heraclitus, asserts the native liberty of thought at all events; becomes, we might truly say, sickly with "the pale cast" of his philosophical questioning. Amid the irreflective actors in that rapidly moving show, so entirely immersed in it superficial as it is that they have no feeling of themselves, he becomes self-conscious. He reflects; and his reflexion has the characteristic melancholy of youth when it is forced suddenly to bethink itself, and for a moment feels already old, feels the temperature of the world about it sensibly colder. Its very ingenuousnes, its sincerity, will make the utterance of what comes to mind just then somewhat shrill or over-emphatic.

Yet Heraclitus, thus superbly turning aside from the vulgar to think, so early in the impetuous spring-tide of Greek history, does but reflect after all the aspect of what actually surrounds him, when he cries out—his philosophy was no matter of formal treatise or system, but of harsh, protesting cries—Πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει. All things give way: nothing remaineth. There had been enquirers before him of another sort, purely physical enquirers, whose bold, contradictory, seemingly impious guesses how and of what primary elements the world of visible things, the sun, the stars, the brutes, their own souls and bodies, had been composed, were themselves a part of the bold enterprise of that romantic age; a series of intellectual adventures, of a piece with its adventures in unknown lands or upon the sea. The resultant intellectual chaos expressed the very spirit of gifted and sanguine but insubordinate youth (remember, that the word νεότης, *youth*, came to mean rashness, insolence!) questioning, deciding, rejecting, on mere rags and tatters of evidence, unbent to discipline, unmethodical, irresponsible. Those opinions too, coming and going, those conjectures as to what under-lay the sensible world, were themselves but fluid elements on the changing surface of existence.

Surface, we say; but was there really anything beneath it? That was what to the majority of his hearers, his readers, Heraclitus, with an eye perhaps on practice, seemed to deny. Perpetual motion, alike in things and in men's thoughts about them—the sad, self-conscious, philosophy of Heraclitus, like one, knowing beyond his years, in this barely adolescent world which he is so eager to instruct, makes no pretence to be able to restrain that. Was not the very essence of thought itself also such perpetual motion? A baffling transition from the dead past, alive one moment since, to a present, itself deceased in turn ere we can say, It is here? A keen analyst of the facts of nature and mind, a master presumably of all the knowledge that then there was, a vigorous definer of thoughts, he does but refer the superficial movement of all persons and things around him to deeper and still more masterful currents of universal change, stealthily withdrawing the apparently solid earth itself from beneath one's feet. The principle of disintegration, the incoherency of fire or flood (for Heraclitus these are but very lively instances of movements, subtler yet more wasteful still) are inherent in the primary elements alike of matter and of the soul. Λέγει που Ἡράκλειτος, says Socrates in the *Cratylus*, ὅτι πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μὲνει. But the principle of lapse, of waste, was, in fact, in one's self. "No one has ever passed twice over the same stream." Nay, the passenger himself is without identity. Upon the same stream at the same moment we do, and do not, embark: for we are, and are not: εἶμέν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶμεν. And this rapid change, if it did not make all knowledge impossible, made it wholly relative, of a kind, that is to say, valueless in the judgment of Plato. Man, the individual, at this particular vanishing-point of time and place, becomes "the measure of all things."

"To know after what manner (says Socrates, after discussing the question in what proportion names, fleeting names, contribute to our knowledge of things) to know after what manner we must be taught, or discover for ourselves, the things that really are (τὰ ὄντα) is perhaps beyond the measure of your powers and mine. We must even content ourselves with the admission of this,

that not from their names, but much rather themselves from themselves, they must be learned and looked for . . . For consider, Cratylus, a point I oft-times dream on—whether or no we may affirm that what is beautiful and good in itself, and whatever is, respectively, in itself, *is* something?

Cratylus. To me at least, Socrates, it seems to be something.

Socrates. Let us consider, then, that 'in-itself,' not whether a face, or anything of that kind, is beautiful, and whether all these things seem to flow like water. But, what is beautiful in itself—may we say—has not this the qualities that define it, always?

Cratylus. It must be so.

Socrates. Can we then, if it is ever passing out below, predicate about it; first, that it *is* that, next, that it has this or that *quality*; or must it not be that, even as we speak, it should straightway become some other thing, and go out under on its way, and be no longer as it is? . . Now, how could that which is never in the same state be a thing at all? . . . Nor, in truth, could it be an object of knowledge to any one; for, even as he who shall know comes upon it, it would become another thing with other qualities, so that it would be no longer matter of knowledge what sort of a thing it is, or in what condition. Now, no form of knowing, methinks, has knowledge of that which it knows to be no-how.

Cratylus. It is as you say.

Socrates. But if, Cratylus, all things change sides, and nothing stays, it is not fitting to say that there is any knowing at all . . . And the consequence of this argument would be, that there is neither any one to know, nor anything to be known. If, on the other hand, there be always that which knows, and that which is known; and if the Beautiful *is*, and the Good *is*, and each one of those things that really are, *is*, then, to my thinking, those things in no way resemble that moving stream of which we are now speaking. Whether, then, these matters be thus, or in that other way as the followers of Heraclitus affirm and many besides, I fear may be no easy thing to search out. But certainly it is not like a sensible man, committing one's self, and one's own soul, to the rule of names, to serve them, and, with faith in names and those who imposed them, as if one knew something thereby, to maintain (damaging

thus the character of that which is, and our own) that there is no sound ring in any one of them, but that all, like earthen pots, let water." *Cratylus*, 439.

Yet from certain fragments in which the *Logos* is already named we may understand that there had been another side to the doctrine of Heraclitus; an attempt on his part, after all, to reduce that world of chaotic mutation to *cosmos*, to the unity of a reasonable order, by the search for and the notation, if there be such, of an antiphonal rhythm, or logic, which, proceeding uniformly from movement to movement, as in some intricate musical theme, might link together in one those contending, infinitely diverse impulses. It was an act of recognition, even on the part of a philosophy of the inconsecutive, the incoherent, the insane, of that Wisdom. which, "reacheth from end to end, sweetly and strongly ordering all things." But if the "weeping philosopher," the first of the pessimists, finds the ground of his melancholy in the sense of universal change, still more must he weep at the dulness of men's ears to that continuous strain of melody throughout it. In truth, what was sympathetic with the hour and the scene in the Heraclitean doctrine, was the boldly aggressive, the paradoxical and negative tendency there, in natural collusion, as it was, with the destructiveness of undisciplined youth; that sense of rapid dissolution, which, according to one's temperament and one's luck in things, might extinguish, or kindle all the more eagerly, an interest in the mere phenomena of existence, of one's so hasty passage through the world.

The theory of the perpetual flux was indeed an apprehension of which the full scope was only to be realised by a later age, in alliance with a larger knowledge of the natural world, a closer observation of the phenomena of mind, than was possible, even for Heraclitus, at that early day. So, the seeds of almost all scientific ideas might seem to have been dimly enfolded in the mind of antiquity; but fecundated, admitted to their full working prerogative, one by one, in after ages, by good favour of the special intellectual conditions belonging to a particular generation, which, on

a sudden, finds itself preoccupied by a formula, not so much new, as renovated by new application.

It is in this way that the most modern metaphysical, and the most modern empirical philosophies alike have illustrated emphatically, justified, expanded, the divination (so we may make bold to call it under the new light now thrown upon it) of the ancient theorist of Ephesus. The entire modern theory of "development," in all its various phases, proved or unprovable—what is it but old Heracliteanism awake once more in a new world, and grown to full proportions?

Πὰντα χωρεῖ, πάντα ῥεῖ—It is the burden of Hegel on the one hand, to whom nature, and art, and polity, and philosophy, aye, and religion too, each in its long historic series, are but so many conscious movements in the secular process of the eternal mind; and on the other hand of Darwin and Darwinism, for which "type" itself properly *is* not but is only always *becoming*. The bold paradox of Heraclitus is, in effect, repeated on all sides, as the vital persuasion just now of a cautiously reasoned experience, and, in illustration of the very law of change which it asserts, may itself presently be superseded as a commonplace. Think of all that subtly disguised movement, *latens processus*, Bacon calls it (again as if by a kind of anticipation) which modern research has detected, measured, hopes to reduce to minuter or ally to still larger currents, in what had seemed most substantial to the naked eye, the inattentive mind. To the "observation and experiment" of the physical enquirer of today, the eye and the sun it lives by reveal themselves, after all, as Heraclitus had declared (scarcely serious, he seemed to those around him) as literally in constant extinction and renewal; the sun only going out more gradually than the human eye; the system meanwhile, of which it is the centre, in ceaseless movement nowhither. Our terrestrial planet is in constant increase by meteoric dust, moving to it through endless time out of infinite space. The Alps drift down the rivers into the plains, as still loftier mountains found their level there ages ago. The granite kernel of the earth, it is said, is ever changing in its very substance, its molecular constitution, by the passage through! it of electric currents. And the Darwinian theory—that "species,"

the identifying forms of animal and vegetable life, immutable though they seem now, as of old in the Garden of Eden, are fashioned by slow development, while perhaps millions of years go by: well! every month is adding to its evidence. Nay, the idea of development (that, too, a thing of growth, developed in the progress of reflexion) is at last invading one by one, as the secret of their explanation, all the products of mind, the very mind itself, the abstract reason; our certainty, for instance, that two and two make four. Gradually we have come to think, or to feel, that primary certitude. Political constitutions, again, as we now see so clearly, are "not made," cannot be made, but "grow." Races, laws, arts, have their origins and end, are themselves ripples only on the great river of organic life; and language is changing on our very lips.

In Plato's day, the Heraclitean flux, so deep down in nature itself—the flood, the fire seemed to have laid hold on man, on the social and moral world, dissolving or disintegrating opinion, first principles, faith, establishing amorphism, so to call it, there also. All along indeed the genius, the good gifts of Greece to the world had had much to do with the mobility of its temperament. Only, when Plato came into potent contact with his countrymen (Pericles, Phidias, Socrates being now gone) in politics, in literature and art, in men's characters, the defect naturally incident to that fine quality had come to have unchecked sway. From the lifeless background of an unprogressive world—Egypt, Syria, frozen Scythia—a world in which the unconscious social aggregate had been everything, the conscious individual, his capacity and rights, almost nothing, the Greek had stepped forth, like the young prince in the fable, to set things going. To the philosophic eye however, about the time when the history of Thucydides leaves off, they might seem to need a regulator, ere the very wheels wore themselves out.

Mobility! We do not think that a necessarily undesirable condition of life, of mind, of the physical world about us. 'Tis the dead things, we may remind ourselves, that after all are most entirely at rest, and might reasonably hold that motion (vicious, fallacious, infectious motion, as Plato inclines to think) covers all

that is best, worth being. And as for philosophy—mobility, versatility, the habit of thought that can most adequately follow the subtle movement of things, that, surely, were the secret of wisdom, of the true knowledge of them. It means susceptibility, sympathetic intelligence, capacity, in short. It was the spirit of God that moved, moves still, in every form of real power, everywhere. Yet to Plato motion becomes the token of unreality in, things, of falsity in our thoughts about them. It is just this principle of mobility, in itself so welcome to all of us, that, with all his contriving care for the future, he desires to withstand. Everywhere he displays himself as an advocate of the immutable. *The Republic* is a proposal to establish it indefectibly in a very precisely regulated, a very exclusive community, which shall be a refuge for elect souls from an ill-made world.

That four powerful influences made for the political unity of Greece was pointed out by Grote: common blood, common language, a common religious centre, the great games in which all alike communicated. He adds that they failed to make the Greeks one people. Pan-hellenism was realised for the first time, and then but imperfectly, by Alexander the Great. The centrifugal tendency had ever been too much for the centripetal tendency in them, the progressive elements for the element of order. Their boundless impatience, that passion for novelty noted in them by Saint Paul, had been a matter of radical character. Their varied natural gifts did but concentrate themselves now and then to an effective centre, that they might be dissipated again, towards every side, in daring adventure alike of action and of thought. Variety and novelty of experience, further quickened by a consciousness trained to an equally nimble power of movement, individualism, the capacities, the claim, of the individual, forced into their utmost play by a ready sense and dexterous appliance of opportunity—herein, certainly, lay at least one-half of their vocation in history. The material conformation of Greece, a land of islands and peninsulas, with a range of sea-coast immense as compared with its area, and broken up by repellent lines of mountain this way and that, nursing jealously a little township of three or four thousand souls

into an independent type of its own, conspired to the same effect. Independence, local and personal—it was the Greek ideal!

Yet of one side only of that ideal, as we may see, of the still half-Asiatic rather than the full Hellenic ideal, of the Ionian ideal as conceived by the Athenian people in particular, people of the coast who have the roaming thoughts of sailors, ever ready to float away anywhither amid their walls of wood. And for many of its admirers certainly the whole Greek people has been a people of the sea-coast. In Lacedaemon, however, as Plato and others thought, hostile, inaccessible in its mountain hollow where it had no need of any walls at all, there were resources for that discipline and order which constitute the other ingredient in a true Hellenism, the saving Dorian soul in it. Right away thither, to that solemn old mountain village, now mistress of Greece, he looks often, in depicting the Perfect City, the ideal state. Perfection, in every case, as we may conceive, is attainable only through a certain combination of opposites, Attic ἄλειφα with the Doric ὄξος; and in the Athens of Plato's day, as he saw with acute prevision, those centrifugal forces had come to be ruinously in excess of the centripetal. Its rapid, empiric, constitutional changes, its restless development of political experiment, the subdivisions of party there, the dominance of faction, as we see it, steadily increasing, breeding on itself, in the pages of Thucydides, justify Plato's long-drawn paradox that it is easier to wrestle against many than against one. The soul, moreover, the inward polity of the individual, was the theatre of a similar dissolution; and truly stability of character had never been a prominent feature in Greek life. Think of the end of Pausanias failing in his patriotism, of Themistocles, of Miltiades, the saviours of Greece, actually selling the country they had so dearly bought to its old enemies.

It is something in this way that, for Plato, motion and the philosophy of motion identify themselves with the vicious tendency in things and thought. Change is the irresistible law of our being, says the Philosophy of Motion. Change, he protests, through the power of a true philosophy, shall not be the law of our being; and it is curious to note the way in which, consciously or unconsciously, that philosophic purpose shapes his treatment, even in minute

detail, of education, of art, of daily life, his very vocabulary, in which such pleasant or innocent words, as "manifold," "embroidered," "changeful," become the synonyms of what is evil. He, first, notes something like a fixed cycle of political change; but conceives it (being change) as, from the very first, backward towards decadence. The ideal city, again, will not be an art-less place: it is by irresistible influence of art, that he means to shape men anew; by a severely monotonous art however, such art as shall speak to youth, all day long, from year to year, almost exclusively, of the loins girded about.

Stimulus, or correction—one hardly knows which to ask for first, as more salutary for our own slumbersome, yet so self-willed, northern temperaments. Perhaps all genuine fire, even the Heraclitean fire, has a power for both.

"Athens," says Dante,

—Athens, aye and Sparta's state
That were in policy so great,
And framed the laws of old,
How small a place they hold,
How poor their art of noble living
Shews by thy delicate contriving,
Where what October spun
November sees outrun!
Think in the time thou canst recall,
Laws, coinage, customs, places all,
How thou hast rearranged,
How oft thy members changed!
Couldst thou but see thyself aright,
And turn thy vision to the light,
Thy likeness thou would'st find
In some sick man reclined;
On couch of down though he be pressed,
He seeks and finds not any rest,
But turns and turns again,
To ease him of his pain.

Purgatory: Canto VI: Shadwell's Translation.

Now what Dante says to Florence, contrasting it with Athens and Sparta as he conceives them, Plato might have said to Athens, in contrast with Sparta, with Lacedaemon, at least as he conceived it.

Chapter Two

Plato and the Doctrine of Rest

over against that world of flux,

Where nothing is, but all things seem,

it is the vocation of Plato to set up a standard of unchangeable reality, which in its highest theoretic development becomes the world of "eternal and immutable ideas," indefectible outlines of thought, yet also the veritable things of experience: the perfect Justice, for instance, which if even the gods mistake it for perfect Injustice is not moved out of its place; the Beauty which is the same, yesterday, today and for ever. In such ideas or ideals, "eternal" as participating in the essential character of the facts they represent to us, we come in contact, as he supposes, with the insoluble, immovable granite beneath and amid the wasting torrent of mere phenomena. And in thus ruling the deliberate aim of his philosophy to be a survey of things *sub specie eternitatis*, the reception of a kind of absolute and independent knowledge (independent, that is, of time and position, the accidents and peculiar point of view of the receiver) Plato is consciously under the influence of another great master of the Pre-Socratic thought, Parmenides, the centre of the School of Elea.

About half a century before the birth of Plato, Socrates being then in all the impressibility of early manhood, Parmenides, according to the witness of Plato himself-Parmenides at the age of sixty-five—had visited Athens at the great festival of the Panathenaea, in company with Zeno the Eleatic, a characteristic specimen of Greek cleverness, of the acute understanding, personally very attractive. Though forty years old, the reputation this Zeno

now enjoyed seems to have been very much the achievement of his youth, and came of a mastery of the sort of paradox youth always delights in. It may be said that no one has ever really answered him; the difficulties with which he played so nicely being really connected with those "antinomies," or contradictions, or inconsistencies, of our thoughts, which more than two thousand years afterwards Kant noted as actually inherent in the mind itself—a certain constitutional weakness or limitation there, in dealing by way of coldblooded reflexion with the direct presentations of its experience. The "Eleatic Palamedes," Plato calls him, "whose dialectic art causes one and the same thing to appear both like and unlike, one and many, at rest and in motion."—Ah! you hear already the sort of words that seem sometimes so barren and unprofitable even in Plato.

It is from extant fragments of a work of his, not a poem, but, appropriately. Τὸ Σύγγραμμα—*The Prose*, of Zeno, that such knowledge as we have of his doctrine, independently of the *Parmenides* of Plato, is derived. The active principle of that doctrine then lies in the acuteness with which he unfolds the contradictions which make against the very conceivability of the fundamental phenomena of sense, in so far as those phenomena are supposed to be really existent independently of ourselves. The truth of experience, of a sensible experience, he seems to protest—Why! sensible experience as such is logically inconceivable. He proved it, or thought, or professed to think, he proved it, in the phenomenon which covers all the most vivid, the seemingly irresistible facts, of such experience. Motion was indeed, as the Heracliteans said, everywhere: was the most incisive of all facts in the realm of supposed sensible fact. Think of the prow of the trireme cleaving the water. For a moment Zeno himself might have seemed but a follower of Heraclitus. He goes beyond him. All is motion: he admits—Yes: only, motion is (I can show it!) a nonsensical term. Follow it, or rather stay by it, and it transforms itself, agreeably enough for the curious observer, into rest. Motion must be motion in space, of course; from point to point in it—and again, more closely, from point to point within such interval; and so on, infinitely; 'tis rest there: perpetual motion is

perpetual rest—the hurricane, the falling tower, the deadly arrow from the bow at whose coming you shake there so wretchedly, Zeno's own rapid word-fence—all alike at rest, to the restful eye of the pure reason! The tortoise, the creature that moves most slowly, cannot be overtaken by Achilles, the swiftest of us all; or at least you can give no rational explanation how it comes to be overtaken. Zeno had an armoury of such enigmas. Can a bushel of corn falling make a noise if a single grain makes none? Again, that motion should cease, we find inconceivable: but can you conceive how it should so much as begin? at what point precisely, in the moving body? Ubiquitous, tyrannous, irresistible, as it may seem, motion, with the whole so dazzling world it covers, is—nothing!

Himself so striking an instance of mobile humour in his exposure of the unreality of all movement, Zeno might be taken so far only for a master, or a slave, of paradox; such paradox indeed as is from the very first inherent in every philosophy which (like that of Plato himself, accepting even Zeno as one of its institutors) opposes the seen to the unseen as falsehood to truth. It was the beginning of scholasticism; and the philosophic mind will perhaps never be quite in health, quite sane or natural, again. The objective, unconscious, pleasantly sensuous mind of the Greek, becoming a man, as he thinks, and putting away childish thoughts, is come with Zeno one step towards Aristotle, towards Aquinas, or shall we say into the rude scholasticism of the pedantic Middle Age? And we must have our regrets. There is always something lost in growing up.

The wholesome scepticism of Hume or Mill for instance, the scepticism of the modern world, beset now with insane speculative figments, has been an appeal from the preconceptions of the understanding to the authority of the senses. With the Greeks, whose metaphysic business was then still all to do, the sceptical action of the mind lay rather in the direction of an appeal from the affirmations of sense to the authority of newly-awakened reason. Just then all those real and verbal difficulties which haunt perversely the human mind always, all those unprofitable queries

which hang about the notions of matter and time and space, their divisibility and the like, seemed to be stirring together, under the utterance of this brilliant, phenomenally clever, perhaps insolent, young man, his master's favourite. To the work of that grave master, nevertheless—of Parmenides—a very different person certainly from his rattling disciple, Zeno's seemingly so fantastic doctrine was sincerely in service. By its destructive criticism, its dissipation of the very conceivability of the central and most incisive of sensible phenomena, it was a real support to Parmenides in his assertion of the nullity of all that is but phenomenal, leaving open and unoccupied space (emptiness, we might say) to that which really is. That which *is*, so, purely, or absolutely, that it is nothing at all to our mixed powers of apprehension—Parmenides and the Eleatic School were much occupied with the determination of the thoughts, or of the mere phrases and words, that belong to that.

Motion discredited, motion gone, all was gone that belonged to an outward and concrete experience, thus securing exclusive validity to the sort of knowledge, if knowledge it is to be called, which corresponds to the "Pure Being," that after all is only definable as "Pure Nothing," that colourless, formless, impalpable existence (οὐσία ἀχρώματος, ἀσχημάτιστος, ἀναφής) to use the Words ofPlato, for whom Parmenides became a sort of inspired voice. Note at times, in reading him, in the closing pages of the fifth book of *The Republic* for instance, the strange accumulation of terms derivative from the abstract verb "To be." As some more modern metaphysicians have done, even Plato seems to pack such terms together almost by rote. Certainly something of paradox may always be felt even in his exposition of "Being," or perhaps a kind of paralysis of speech—ἀφασία.

Parmenides himself had borrowed the thought from another, though he made it his own. Plato, in *The Republic*, as a critic of Homer, by way of fitting Homer the better for the use of the schoolboys of the ideal city, is ready to sacrifice much of that graceful polytheism in which the Greeks anticipated the *dulia* of saints and angels in the catholic church. He does this to the advantage

of a very abstract, and as it may seem disinterested, certainly an uninteresting, notion of deity, which is in truth—well! one of the dry sticks of mere "natural theology," as it is called. In this he was but following the first, the original, founder of the Eleatic School, Xenophanes, who in a somewhat scornful spirit had urged on men's attention that, in their prayers and sacrifices to the gods, in all their various thoughts and statements, graceful or hideous, about them, they had only all along with much fallacy been making gods after their own likeness, as horse or dog too, if perchance it cast a glance towards heaven, would after the same manner project thither the likeness of horse or dog: that to think of deity you must think of it as neither here nor there, then nor now; you must away with all limitations of time and space and matter, nay, with the very conditions, the limitation, of thought itself; apparently not observing that to think of it in this way was in reality not to think of it at all—That in short Being so pure as this is pure Nothing.

In opposition then to the anthropomorphic religious poetry of Homer, Xenophanes elaborates the notion, or rather the abstract or purely verbal definition, of that which really is (τὸ ὄν) as inclusive of all time, and space, and mode; yet so that all which can be identified concretely with mode and space and time is but antithetic to it, as finite to infinite, seeming to being, contingent to necessary, the temporal, in a word, to the eternal. Once for all, in harshest dualism, the only true yet so barren existence is opposed to the world of phenomena—of colour and form and sound and imagination and love, of empirical knowledge. Objects, real objects, as we know, grow in reality towards us in proportion as we define their various qualities. And yet, from another point of view, definition, qualification, is a negative process: it is as if each added quality took from the object we are defining one or more potential qualities. The more definite things become as objects of sensible or other empirical apprehension, the more, it might be said from the logician's point of view, have we denied about them. It might seem that their increasing reality as objects of sense was in direct proportion to the increase of their distance from that perfect Being which is everywhere and at all times in every possible mode of being. A thing visibly white is found as one approaches

it to be also smooth to the touch; and this added quality, says the formal logician, does but deprive it of all other possible modes of texture; *Omnis determinatio est negatio.* Vain puerilities! you may exclaim—with justice. Yet such are the considerations which await the mind that suffers itself to dwell awhile on the abstract formula to which the "rational theology" of Xenophanes leads him. It involved the assertion of an absolute difference between the original and all that is or can be derived from it; that the former annuls, or is exclusive of, the latter, which has in truth no real or legitimate standing-ground as matter of knowledge; that, in opposite yet equally unanswerable senses, at both ends of experience there is—nothing! Of the most concrete object, as of the most abstract, it might be said, that it more properly is not than is.

From Xenophanes, as a critic of the polytheism of the Greek religious poets, that most abstract and arid of formulae, *Pure Being*, closed in indifferently on every side upon itself, and suspended in the midst of nothing, like a hard transparent crystal ball, as he says; "The Absolute;" "The One;" passed to his fellow-citizen Parmenides, seeking, doubtless in the true spirit of philosophy, for the centre of the universe, of his own experience of it, for some common measure of the experience of all men. To enforce a reasonable unity and order, to impress some larger likeness of reason, as one knows it in one's self, upon the chaotic infinitude of the impressions that reach us from every side, is what all philosophy as such proposes. Κόσμος; order; reasonable, delightful, order; is a word that became very dear, as we know, to the Greek soul, to what was perhaps most essentially Greek in it, to the Dorian element there. Apollo, the Dorian god, was but its visible consecration. It was what, under his blessing, art superinduced upon the rough stone, the yielding clay, the jarring metallic strings, the common speech of every day. Philosophy, in its turn, with enlarging purpose, would project a similar light of intelligence upon the at first sight somewhat unmeaning world we find actually around us—project it; or rather discover it, as being really pre-existent there, if one were happy enough to get one's self into the right point of view. To certain fortunate minds the efficacious moment of insight would come, when, with

delightful adaptation of means to ends, of the parts to the whole, the entire scene about one, bewildering, unsympathetic, unreasonable, on a superficial view, would put on, for them at least, κοσμιότης, that so welcome expression of fitness, which it is the business of the fine arts to convey into material things, of the art of discipline to enforce upon the lives of men. The primitive Ionian philosophers had found, or thought they found, such a principle (ἀρχή) in the force of some omnipresent physical element, air, water, fire; or in some common law, motion, attraction, repulsion; as Plato would find it in an eternally appointed hierarchy of genus and species; as the science of our day embraces it (perhaps after all only in fancy) in the expansion of a large body of observed facts into some all-comprehensive hypothesis, such as "evolution."

For Parmenides, at his early day, himself, as some remnants of his work in that direction bear witness, an acute and curious observer of the concrete and sensible phenomena of nature, that principle of reasonable unity seemed attainable only by a virtual negation, by the obliteration, of all such phenomena. When we have learned as exactly as we can all the curious processes at work in our own bodies or souls, in the stars, in or under the earth, their very definiteness, their limitation, will but make them the more antagonistic to that which alone really is, because it is always and everywhere itself, identical exclusively with itself. Phenomena!—by the force of such arguments as Zeno's, the instructed would make a clean sweep of them, for the establishment, in the resultant void, of the "One," with which it is impossible (παρὰ πάντα λεγόμενα) in spite of common language, and of what seems common sense, for the "Many"—the hills and cities of Greece, you and me, Parmenides himself, really to co-exist at all. "Parmenides," says one, "had stumbled upon the modern thesis that thought and being are the same."

Something like this—this impossibly abstract doctrine—is what Plato's "father in philosophy" had had to proclaim, in the midst of the busy, brilliant, already complicated life of the recently founded colonial town of Elea. It was like the revelation to Israel in the midst of picturesque idolatries, "The Lord thy God is one

Lord;" only that here it made no claim to touch the affections, or even to warm the imagination. Israel's Greek cousin was to undergo a harder, a more distant and repressive discipline in those matters, to which a peculiarly austere moral beauty, at once self-reliant and submissive, the aesthetic expression of which has a peculiar, an irresistible charm, would in due time correspond.

It was in difficult hexameter verse, in a poem which from himself or from others had received the title—Περὶ φύσεως (*De Natura Rerum*) that Parmenides set forth his ideas. From the writings of Clement of Alexandria, and other later writers large in quotation, diligent modern scholarship has collected fragments of it, which afford sufficient independent evidence of his manner of thought, and supplement conveniently Plato's, of course highly subjective, presentment in his *Parmenides* of what had so deeply influenced him—

"Now come!" (this fragment of Parmenides is in Proclus, who happened to quote it in commenting on the *Timaeus* of Plato) "Come! do you listen, and take home what I shall tell you: what are the two paths of search after right understanding. The one,

ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε κὰ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εῖναι

"that what is, is; and that what is not, is not;" or, in the Latin of scholasticism, here inaugurated by Parmenides, *esse ens*: *non esse non ens*—

πειθοῦς ἐστι κέλευθος; ἀληθείη γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ

"this is the path to persuasion, for truth goes along with it. The other—that what is, is not; and by consequence that what is not, is—I tell you that is the way which goes counter to persuasion:

τὴν δή τοι φράζω παναπειθέα ἔμμεν ἄταρπόν
οὔτε γὰρ ἄν γνοίης τό γε μὴ ἐὸν οὐ γὰρ ἐφικτόν

That which is not, never could you know: there is no way of getting at that; nor could you explain it to another; for Thought and Being are identical."—Famous utterance, yet of so dubious omen!—Τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι—*idem est enim cogitare et esse.* "It is one to me," he proceeds, "at what point I begin; for thither I shall come back over again: τόθι γὰρ πάλιν ἵξομαι αὖθις."

Yes, truly! again and again, in an empty circle, we may say; and certainly, with those dry and difficult words in our ears, may think for a moment that philosophic reflexion has already done that delightfully superficial Greek world an ill turn, troubling so early its ingenuous soul; that the European mind, as was said, will never be quite sane again. It has been put on a quest (vain quest it may prove to be) after a kind of knowledge perhaps not properly attainable. Hereafter, in every age, some will be found to start afresh quixotically, through what wastes of words! in search of that true Substance, the One, the Absolute, which to the majority of acute people is after all but zero, and a mere algebraic symbol for nothingness. In themselves, by the way, such search may bring out fine intellectual qualities; and thus, in turn, be of service to those who can profit by the spectacle of an enthusiasm not meant for them; must nevertheless be admitted to have had all along something of disease about it; as indeed to Plato himself the philosophic instinct as such is a form of "mania."

An infectious mania, it might seem—that strange passion for nonentity, to which the Greek was so oddly liable, to which the human mind generally might be thought to have been constitutionally predisposed; for the doctrine of "The One" had come to the surface before in old Indian dreams of self-annihilation, which had been revived, in the second century after Christ, in the ecstasies (ecstasies of the pure spirit, leaving the body behind it) recommended by the Neo-Platonists; and again, in the Middle Age, as a finer shade of Christian experience, in the mystic doctrines of Eckhart and Tauler concerning that union with God which can only be attained by the literal negation of self, by a kind of moral suicide; of which something also may be found, under the cowl of the monk, in the clear, cold, inaccessible, impossible

heights of the book of the *Imitation.* It presents itself once more, now altogether beyond Christian influence, in the hard and ambitious intellectualism of Spinoza; a doctrine of pure repellent substance—substance "in vacuo," to be lost in which, however, would be the proper consummation of the transitory individual life. Spinoza's own absolutely colourless existence was a practical comment upon it. Descartes, Malebranche, under the monk's cowl again; Leibnitz; Berkeley with his theory of the "Vision of all things in God;" do but present variations on the same theme through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By one and all it is assumed, in the words of Plato, that to be colourless, formless, impalpable is the note of the superior grade of knowledge and existence, evanescing steadily, as one ascends towards that perfect (perhaps not quite attainable) condition of either, which in truth can only be attained by the suppression of all the rule and outline of one's own actual experience and thought.

Something like that certainly there had been already in the doctrine of Parmenides, to whom Plato was so willing to go to school. And in the nineteenth century, as on the one hand the philosophy of motion, of the "perpetual flux," receives its share of verification from that theory of development with which in various forms all modern science is prepossessed; so, on the other hand, the philosophy of rest also, of the perpetual lethargy, the Parmenidean assertion of the exclusive reign of "The One," receives an unlooked-for testimony from the modern physical philosopher, hinting that the phenomena he deals with—matter, organism, consciousness—began in a state of indeterminate, abstract indifference, with a single uneasy start in a sort of eternal sleep, a ripple on the dead, level surface. Increasing indeed for a while in radius and depth, under the force of mechanic law, the world of motion and life is however destined, by force of its own friction, to be restored sooner or later to equilibrium; nay, is already gone back some noticeable degrees (how desirably!) to the primeval indifference, as may be understood by those who can reckon the time it will take for our worn-out planet, surviving all the fret of the humanity it housed for a while, to be drawn into the sun.

But it is of Plato after all we should be thinking; of the comparatively temperate thoughts, the *axiomata media*, he was able to derive, by a sort of compromise, from the impossible paradox of his ancient master. What was it, among things inevitably manifest on his pages as we read him, that Plato borrowed and kept from the Eleatic School!

Two essential judgments of his philosophy: The opposition of what *is*, to what *appears*; and the parallel opposition of knowledge to opinion; (ἕτερον ἐπιστήμης δόξα, ἐφ ἑτέρῳ ἄρα ἕτερόν τι δυναμένη ἑκατέρα αὐτων πεφυκε, οὐκ ἐγχωρεῖ γνωστὸν καὶ δοξαστὸν ταὐτὸν εἶναι) and thirdly, to illustrate that opposition, the figurative use, so impressed on thought and speech by Plato that it has come to seem hardly a figure of speech at all but appropriate philosophic language, of the opposition of light to darkness—

"Well, then (Socrates is made to say in the fifth book of *The Republic*) if what is, is the object of knowledge, would not something other than what is, be the object of opinion?

Yes! something else.

Does opinion then opine what is not; or is it impossible to have even opinion concerning what is not? Consider! does not he who has opinion direct his opinion *upon* something? or is it impossible, again, to have an opinion, yet an opinion about nothing?

Impossible!

But he who has an opinion has opinion at least about something; hasn't he? Yet after all what is not, is not a thing, but would most properly be denominated nothing.

Certainly.

Now to what is not, we assigned of necessity ignorance: to what is, knowledge.

Rightly: he said.

Neither what is, then, nor what is not, is the object of opinion.

No!

Opinion therefore would be neither ignorance nor knowledge.

It seems not.

Is it, then, *beyond* these; going beyond knowledge in clearness, beyond ignorance in obscurity?

Neither the one, nor the other.

But, I asked, opinion seems to you (doesn't it?) to be a darker thing than knowledge, yet lighter than ignorance.

Very much so; he answered.

Does it lie *within* those two?

Yes.

Opinion, then, would be midway, between these two conditions?

Undoubtedly so.

Now didn't we say in what went before that if anything became apparent such that it is, and is not, at the same time, a thing of that kind would lie between that which *is* in unmixed clearness, and that which wholly is *not*; and that there would be, in regard to that, neither knowledge nor ignorance; but, again, a condition revealing itself between ignorance and knowledge?

Rightly.

And now, between these two, what we call 'opinion' has in fact revealed itself.

Clearly so.

It would remain for us therefore, as it seems, to find that which partakes of both—both of Being and Not-being, and which could rightly be called by neither term distinctly; in order that, if it appear, we may in justice determine it to be the object of opinion; assigning the extremes to the extremes, the intermediate to what comes between them. Or is it not thus?

Thus it is.

These points then being assumed, let him tell me! let him speak and give his answer—that excellent person, who on the one hand thinks there is no Beauty itself, nor any idea of Beauty itself, ever in the same condition in regard to the same things (ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὡσαύτως ἔχουσαν) yet, on the other hand, holds that there are the many beautiful objects—that lover of sight (ὁ φιλοθεάμων) who can by no means bear it if any one says that the beautiful is one, the just also, and the rest, after the same way. For good Sir! we shall say, pray tell us, is there any one of these many beautiful things which will not appear ugly (under certain

conditions) of the many just or pious actions which will not seem unjust or impious?

No! he answered. Rather it must be that they shall seem, in a manner, both beautiful and ugly; and all the rest you ask of.

Well! The many double things—Do they seem to be at all less half than double?

Not at all.

And great, in truth, and little, and light, and heavy—will they at all more truly be called by these names which we may give them, than by the opposite names?

No! he said; but each of them will always hold of both.

Every several instance of 'The Many,' then—is it, more truly than it is not, that which one may affirm it to be?

It is like people at supper-parties he said (very Attic supper-parties!) playing on words, and the children's riddle about the eunuch and his fling round the bat—with what, and on what, the riddle says he hit it, for these things also seem to set both ways, and it is not possible, fixedly, to conceive any one of them either to be, or not to be; neither both, nor the one, nor the other.

Have you anything then you can do with them; or anywhere you can place them with fairer effect than in that position between being and the being not? For presumably they will not appear more obscure than what is not, so as *not* to be, still more; nor more luminous than what is, so as to *be*, even more than that. We have found then that the many customary notions of the many, about Beauty and the rest are revolved somewhere between not-being and being unmixedly.

So we have.

And agreed, at least, at the outset, that if anything of this sort presented itself, it must be declared matter not of knowledge, but of opinion; to be apprehended by the intermediate faculty, as it wanders unfixed, there, between." *Republic*, 478.

Many a train of thought, many a turn of expression, only too familiar, some may think, to the reader of Plato, are summarised in that troublesome yet perhaps attractive passage. The influence then of Parmenides on Plato had made him, incurably (shall we

say?) a dualist. Only, practically, Plato's richly coloured genius will find a compromise between the One which alone really is, is yet so empty a thought for finite minds; and the Many, which most properly is not, yet presses so closely on eye and ear and heart and fancy and will, at every moment. That which really is (τὸ ὄν) the One, if he is really to think about it at all, must admit within it a certain variety of members; and, in effect, for Plato the true Being, the Absolute, the One, does become delightfully multiple, as the world of ideas—appreciable, through years of loving study, more and more clearly, one by one, as the perfectly concrete, mutually adjusted, permanent forms of our veritable experience: the Bravery, for instance, that cannot be confused, not merely with Cowardice, but with Wisdom, or Humility. One after another they emerge again from the dead level, the Parmenidean tabula rasa, with nothing less than the reality of persons face to face with us, of a personal identity. It was as if the firm plastic outlines of the delightful old Greek polytheism had found their way back after all into a repellent monotheism. Prefer as he may in theory that blank white light of the One—its sterile, "formless, colourless, impalpable," eternal identity with itself—the world, and this chiefly is why the world has not forgotten him, will be for him, as he is by no means colour-blind, by no means a colourless place. He will suffer it to come to him, as his pages convey it in turn to us, with the liveliest variety of hue, as in that conspicuously visual emblem of it, the outline of which (essentially characteristic of himself as it seems) he had really borrowed from the old Eleatic teacher who had tried so hard to close the bodily eye that he might the better apprehend the world unseen—

"And now (he writes in the seventh book of *The Republic*) take for a figure of human nature, as regards education and the lack thereof, some such condition as this. Think you see people as it were in some abode below-ground, like a cave, having its entrance spread out upwards towards the light, broad, across the whole cavern. Suppose them here from childhood; their legs and necks chained, so that there they stay, and can see only what is in front of them, being unable by reason of the chain to move their

heads round about: and the light of a fire upon them, blazing from far above, behind their backs: between the fire and the prisoners away up aloft: and see beside it a low wall built along, as with the showmen, in front of the people lie the screens above which they exhibit their wonders.

I see: he said.

See, then, along this low wall, men, bearing vessels of all sorts wrought in stone and wood; and, naturally, some of the bearers talking, other silent.

It is a strange figure you describe: said he: and strange prisoners—

They are like ourselves: I answered!" *Republic*, 514.

Metaphysical formulae have always their practical equivalents. The ethical alliance of Heraclitus is with the Sophists, and the Cyrenaics or the Epicureans; that of Parmenides, with Socrates, and the Cynics or the Stoics. The Cynic or Stoic ideal of a static calm is as truly the moral or practical equivalent of the Parmenidean doctrine of the One, as the Cyrenaic μονόχρονος ἡδονή—the pleasure of the ideal now—is the practical equivalent of the doctrine of motion; and, as sometimes happens, what seems hopelessly perverse as a metaphysic for the understanding is found to be realisable enough as one of many phases of our so flexible human feeling. The abstract philosophy of the One might seem indeed to have been translated into the terms of a human will in the rigid, disinterested, renunciant career of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, its mortal coldness. Let me however conclude with a document of the Eleatic temper, nearer in its origin to the age of Plato: an ancient fragment of Cleanthes the Stoic, which has justly stirred the admiration of Stoical minds; though truly, so hard is it not to lapse from those austere heights, the One, the Absolute, has become in it after all, with much varied colour and detail in his relations to concrete things and persons, our father Zeus.

An illustrious athlete; then a mendicant dealer in water-melons; chief pontiff lastly of the sect of the Stoics; Cleanthes, as we see him in anecdote at least, is always a loyal, sometimes a very

quaintly loyal, follower of the Parmenidean or Stoic doctrine of detachment from all material things. It was at the most critical points perhaps of such detachment, that somewhere about the year three hundred before Christ, he put together the verses of his famous "Hymn." By its practical indifference, its resignation, its passive submission to the One, the undivided Intelligence, which διὰ πάντων φοιτᾷ—goes to and fro through all things, the Stoic pontiff is true to the Parmenidean schooling of his flock; yet departs from it also in a measure by a certain expansion of phrase, inevitable, it may be, if one has to speak at all about that chilly abstraction, still more make a hymn to it. He is far from the cold precept of Spinoza, that great re-assertor of the Parmenidean tradition: That whoso loves God truly must not expect to be loved by Him in return. In truth, there are echoes here from many various sources. Ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ γένος ἐσμεν—that is quoted, as you remember, by Saint Paul, so just after all to the pagan world, as its testimony to some deeper *Gnôsis* than its own. Certainly Cleanthes has conceived his abstract monotheism a little more winningly, somewhat better, than dry, pedantic Xenophanes; perhaps because Socrates and Plato have lived meanwhile. You might even fancy what he says an echo from Israel's devout response to the announcement: "The Lord thy God is one Lord." The Greek certainly is come very near to his unknown cousin at Sion in what follows—

κύδιστ', ἀθανάτων, πολυώνυμε, παγκρατὲς αἰεὶ
Ζεῦ, φεως ἀρχηγέ, νόμου μέτα πάντα κυβερνων,
χαῖρε σὲ γὰρ πάντεσσι θέμις θνητοῖσι προσαυδᾶν. κ.τ.λ.

Mullach, *Fragmenta Philosophorum Graecorum,* I. p. 151.

Thou O Zeus art praised above all gods: many are Thy
Names and Thine is all power for ever.
The beginning of the world was from Thee: and with law Thou rulest over all things.
Unto Thee may all flesh speak: for we are Thy offspring.

Therefore will I raise a hymn unto Thee: and will ever sing of Thy power.

The whole order of the heavens obeyeth Thy word: as it moveth around the earth:

With little and great lights mixed together: how great art Thou, King above all for ever!

Nor is anything done upon earth apart from Thee: nor in the firmament, nor in the seas:

Save that which the wicked do: by their own folly.

But Thine is the skill to set even the crooked straight: what is without fashion is fashioned and the alien akin before Thee.

Thus hast Thou fitted together all things in one: the good with the evil:

That Thy word should be one in all things: abiding for ever.

Let folly be dispersed from our souls: that we may repay Thee the honour, wherewith Thou hast honoured us:

Singing praise of Thy works for ever: as becometh the sons of men.

Chapter Three

Plato and the Doctrine of Number

His devotion to the austere and abstract philosophy of Parmenides, its passivity or indifference, could not repress the opulent genius of Plato, or transform him into a cynic. Another ancient philosopher, Pythagoras, set the frozen waves in motion again, brought back to Plato's recognition all that multiplicity in men's experience to which Heraclitus had borne such emphatic witness; but as rhythm or melody now in movement truly, but moving as disciplined sound and with the reasonable soul of music in it.

Pythagoras, or the founder of the Pythagorean philosophy, is the third of those earlier masters, who explain the intellectual confirmation of Plato by way of antecedent. What he said, or was believed to have said, is almost everywhere in the very texture of Platonic philosophy, as *vera vox*, an authority with prescript claim on sympathetic or at least reverent consideration, to be developed generously in the natural growth of Plato's own thoughts.

Nothing remains of his writings: dark statements only, as occasion served, in later authors. Plato himself attributes those doctrines of his not to Pythagoras but to the Pythagoreans. But if no such name had come down to us we might have understood how, in the search for the philosophic unity of experience, a common measure of things, for a cosmical hypothesis, number and the truths of number would come to fill the place occupied by some omnipresent physical element, air, fire, water, in the philosophies of Ionia; by the abstract and exclusive idea of the unity of Being itself in the system of Parmenides. To realise unity in variety, to discover *cosmos*—an order that shall satisfy one's reasonable soul-below and within apparent chaos: is from first to last the continu-

ous purpose of what we call philosophy. Well! Pythagoras seems to have found that unity of principle (ἀρχὴ) in the dominion of number everywhere, the proportion, the harmony, the music, into which number as such expands. Truths of number: the essential laws of measure in time and space—Yes, these are indeed everywhere in our experience: must, as Kant can explain to us, be an element in anything we are able so much as to conceive at all. And music, covering all it does, for Pythagoras, for Plato and Platonism—music, which though it is of course much; besides, is certainly a formal development of purely numerical laws: that too surely *is* something, independently of ourselves, in the real world without us, like a personal intelligible soul durably resident there for those who bring intelligence of it, of music, with them; to be known on the favourite Platonic principle of like by like (ὅμοιον ὁμοίω) though the incapable or uninstructed ear, in various degrees of dulness, may fail to apprehend it.

The *Golden Verses* of Pythagoras parted early into dust (that seems strange, if they were ever really written in a book) and antiquity itself knows little directly about his doctrine. Yet Pythagoras is much more than a mere name, a term, for locating as well as may be a philosophical abstraction. Pythagoras, his person, his memory, attracted from the first a kind of fairy-tale of mystic science. The philosophy of number, of music and proportion, came, and has remained, in a cloud of legendary glory; the gradual accumulation of which Porphyry and Iamblichus, the fantastic masters of Neo-Platonism, or Neo-Pythagoreanism, have embodied in their so-called *Lives* of him, like some antique fable richly embossed with starry wonders. In this spirit there had been much writing about him: that he was a son of Apollo, nay, Apollo himself—the twilight, attempered. Hyperborean Apollo, like the sun in Lapland: that his person gleamed at times with a supernatural brightness: that he had exposed to those who loved him a golden thigh: how Abaris, the minister of that god, had come flying to him on a golden arrow: of his almost impossible journeys: how he was seen, had lectured indeed, in different places at the same time. As he walked on the banks of the Nessus the river had whispered his name: he had been, in the secondary sense, various

persons in the course of ages; a courtesan once, for some ancient sin in him; and then a hero, Euphorbus, son of Panthus; could remember very distinctly so recent a matter as the Trojan war, and had recognised in a moment his own old armour, hanging on the wall, above one of his old dead bodies, in the temple of Athene at Argos; showing out all along only by hints and flashes the abysses of divine knowledge within him, sometimes by miracle. For if the philosopher really is all that Pythagoras or the Pythagoreans suppose; if the material world is so perfect a musical instrument, and he knows its theory so well, he might surely give practical and sensible proof of that on occasion, by himself improvising music upon it in direct miracle. And so there, in Porphyry and Iamblichus, the appropriate miracles are.

If the mistaken affection of the disciples of dreamy Neo-Platonic *Gnôsis* at Alexandria, in the third or fourth century of our era, has thus made it impossible to separate later legend from original evidence as to what he was, and said, and how he said it, yet that there was a brilliant, perhaps a showy, personality there, infusing the most abstract truths with what would tell on the fancy, seems more than probable, and, though he would appear really to have had from the first much of mystery or mysticism about him, the thaumaturge of Samos, "whom even the vulgar might follow as a conjuror," must have been very unlike the lonely "weeping" philosopher of Ephesus, or the almost disembodied philosopher of Elea. In the very person and doings of this earliest master of the doctrine of harmony, people saw that philosophy is

> Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
> But musical as is Apollo's lute.

And in turn he abounded in influence on the deeds, the persons, of others, as if he had really carried a magic lute in his hands to charm them. As his fellow-citizens had all but identified Pythagoras with him, so Apollo remained the peculiar patron of the Pythagoreans; and we may note, in connexion with their influence on Plato, that as Apollo was the chosen ancestral deity, so Pythagoreanism became especially the philosophy, of the severely

musical Dorian Greeks. If, as Plato was aware, or fancied, true Spartans knew more of philosophy than they let strangers suppose—turned them all out from time to time and feasted on it in secret, for the strengthening of their souls—it was precisely the Pythagorean philosophy of music, of austere music, mastering, remoulding, men's very bodies, they would then have discussed with one another.

A native of Ionia, it is in one of the Dorian cities of Magna Graecia, at Crotona, that Pythagoras finds the fitting scene of his mysterious influence. He founds there something like an ideal republic, or rather a religious brotherhood, under a rule outwardly expressive of that inward idea of order or harmony, so dear to the Dorian soul, and, for it, as for him, ever the peculiar pledge of the presence of philosophic truth. Ἀλήθειαν δὲ ἀμετρίᾳ ἡγεῖ συγγενῆ εἶναι, ἢ ἐμμετρία; asks one in the *The Republic*; and Ἐμμετρία, of course, is the answer.

Recalling the student of Plato to penetrate as far as he can into that mysterious community, there, long before, in the imagination of Pythagoras is the first dream of the Perfect City, with all those peculiar ethical sympathies which the Platonic Republic enforces already well defined—the perfect mystic body of the Dorian soul, built, as Plato requires, to the strains of music. As a whole, and in its members severally, it would reproduce and visibly reflect to others that inward order and harmony of which each one was a part. As such, the Pythagorean order (it was itself an "order") expanded and was long maintained in those cities of *Magna Graecia* which had been the scene of the practical no less than of the speculative activity of its founder; and in one of which, Metapontum, go late as the days of Cicero what was believed to be the tomb of Pythagoras was still shown. Order, harmony, the temperance, which, as Plato will explain to us, will convince us by the visible presentment of it in the faultless person of the youthful Charmides, is like a musical harmony—that was the chief thing Pythagoras exacted from his followers, at least at first, though they were mainly of the noble and wealthy class who could have done what they liked—temperance in a religious intention, with many singular scruples concerning bodily purification, diet, and

the like. For if, according to his philosophy, the soul had come from heaven, to use the phrase of Wordsworth reproducing the central Pythagorean doctrine, "from heaven," as he says, "trailing clouds of glory," so the arguments of Pythagoras were always more or less explicitly involving one in consideration of the means by which one might get back thither, of which means, surely, abstinence, the repression of one's carnal elements, must be one; in consideration also, in curious questions, as to the relationship of those carnal elements in us to the pilgrim soul, before and after, for which he was so anxious to secure full use of all the opportunities of further perfecting which might yet await it, in the many revolutions of its existence. In the midst of that aesthetically so brilliant world of Greater Greece, as if anticipating Plato, he has, like the philosophic kings of the Platonic Republic, already something of the monk, of monastic *ascesis*, about him. Its purpose is to fit him for, duly to refine his nature towards, that closer vision of truth to which perchance he may be even now upon his way. The secrecy again, that characteristic silence of which the philosopher of music was, perhaps not inconsistently, a lover, which enveloped the entire action of the Pythagoreans, and had indeed kept Pythagoras himself, as some have thought, from committing his thoughts to writing at all, was congruous with such monkish discipline. *Mysticism*—the condition of the initiated—is a word derived, as we know, from a Greek verb which may perhaps mean to close the eye that one may better perceive the invisible, but more probably means to close the lips while the soul is brooding over what cannot be uttered. Later Christian admirers said of him, that he had hidden the words of God in his heart.

The dust of his golden verses perhaps, but certainly the gold-dust of his thoughts, lies scattered all along Greek literature from Plato to the latest of the Greek Fathers of the Church. You may find it serviceably worked out in the notes of Zeller's excellent work on Greek philosophy, and, with more sparing comment, in Mullach's *Fragmenta Philosophorum Graecorum*. No one of those Pre-Socratic philosophers has been the subject of a more enthusiastic erudition. For his mind's health however, if in doing so he is not making a disproportionate use of his time, inconsis-

tent certainly with the essential temper of the doctrine he seeks for, and such as a true Pythagorean would instantly condemn, the young scholar might be recommended to go straight to the pages of Aristotle—those discreet, unromantic pages, salutary therefore to listen to, concerning doctrines in themselves so fantastic.[1] In the *Ethics*, as you may know, in the *Metaphysics*, and elsewhere, Aristotle gives many not unsympathetic notices at least of the disciples, which, by way of sober contrast on a matter from the first profusely, perhaps cheaply, embroidered, is like quiet information from Pythagoras himself. Only, remember always in reading Plato—Plato, as a sincere learner in the school of Pythagoras-that the essence, the active principle of the Pythagorean doctrine, resides, not as with the ancient Eleatics, nor as with our modern selves too often, in the "infinite," those eternities, infinitudes, abysses, Carlyle invokes for us so often—in no cultus of the infinite (τὸ ἄπειρον) but in the finite (τὸ πέρας). It is so indeed, with that exception of the Parmenidean sect, through all Greek philosophy, congruously with the proper vocation of the people of art, of art as being itself the finite, ever controlling the infinite, the formless. Those famous συστοιχίαι των ἐναντιων, or parallel columns of contraries: the One and the Many: Odd and Even, and the like: Good and Evil: are indeed all reducible ultimately to terms of *art*, as the *expressive* and the *inexpressive.* Now observe that Plato's "theory of ideas" is but an effort to enforce the Pythagorean πέρας, with all the unity-in-variety of concerted music—eternal definition of the finite, upon τὸ ἄπειρον, the infinite, the indefinite, formless, brute matter, of our experience of the world.

For it is of Plato again we should be thinking, and of Pythagoras or the Pythagoreans, only so far as they explain the actual conformation of Plato's thoughts as we find them, especially in *The Republic.* Let us see, as much as possible in his own words, what Plato received from that older philosophy, of which the two leading persuasions were; first, the universality, the ultimate truth, of numerical, of musical law; and secondly, the pre-existence, the double eternity, of the soul.

In spirit, then, we are certainly of the Pythagorean company in that most characteristic dialogue, the *Meno*, in which Plato discusses the nature, the true idea, of Virtue, or rather how one may attain thereto; compelled to this subordinate and accessory question by the intellectual cowardice of his disciple, though after his manner he flashes irrepressible light on that other primary and really indispensable question by the way. Pythagoras, who had founded his famous brotherhood by way of turning theory into practice, must have had, of course, definite views on that most practical question, how virtue is to be attained by us; and Plato is certainly faithful to him in assigning the causation of virtue partly to discipline, forming habit (ἄσκησις) as enforced on the monk, the soldier, the schoolboy, as he is true to his own experience in assigning it partly also to a good natural disposition (φύσει) and he suggests afterwards, as I suppose some of us would be ready to do, that virtue is due also in part (θεία μοίρα) to the good pleasure of heaven, to unmerited grace. Whatever else, however, may be held about it, it is certain (he admits) that virtue comes in great measure through learning. But is there in very deed such a thing as learning? asks the eristic Meno, who is so youthfully fond of argument for its own sake, and must exercise by display his already well-trained intellectual muscle. Is not that favourite, that characteristic, Greek paradox, that it is impossible to be taught, and therefore useless to seek, what one does not know already, after all the expression of an empirical truth?

"*Meno.* After what manner Socrates will you seek for that which you do not know at all-what it is? For what sort of thing, among the things you know not, will you propose as your object of search? Or even if you should have lighted full upon it, how will you know that it is this thing which you knew not.

Socrates. Ah! I understand the kind of thing you mean to say, Meno. Do you see what a contentious argument this is you are bringing down on our heads?—that forsooth it is not possible for a man to seek either for what he knows, or for what he knows not; inasmuch as he would not seek what he knows, at least; because he knows it, and to one in such case there is no need of seeking.

Nor would he seek after what he knows not, for he knows not what he shall seek for." *Meno*, 80.

Well! that is true in a sense, as Socrates admits; not however in any sense which encourages idle acquiescence in what according to common language is our ignorance. There is a sense (it is exemplified in regard to sound and colour, perhaps in some far more important things) in which it is matter of experience that it is impossible to seek for, or be taught, what one does not know already. He who is in total ignorance of musical notes, who has no ear, will certainly be unaware of them when they light on him, or he lights upon them. Where could one begin? we ask, in certain cases where not to know at all means incapacity for receiving knowledge. Yes, certainly; the Pythagoreans are right in saying that what we call learning is in fact reminiscence—ἀνάμνησις: famous word! and Socrates proceeds to show in what precise way it is impossible or possible to find out what you don't know: how that happens. In full use of the dialogue, as itself the instrument most fit for him of whatever what we call teaching and learning may really be, Plato, dramatic always, brings in one of Meno's slaves, a boy who speaks Greek nicely, but knows nothing of geometry: introduces him, we may fancy, into a mathematical lecture-room where diagrams are to be seen on the walls, cubes and the like lying on the table—particular objects, the mere sight of which will rouse him when subjected to the dialectical treatment, to universal truths concerning them. The problem required of him is to describe a square of a particular size: to find the line which must be the side of such a square; and he is to find it for himself. Meno, carefully on his guard, is to watch whether the boy is taught by Socrates in any of his answers; whether he answers anything at any point otherwise than by way of reminiscence and really out of his own mind, as the reasonable questions of Socrates fall like water on the seed-ground, or like sunlight on the photographer's negative.

"See him now!" he cries triumphantly, "How he remembers; in the logical order; as he ought to remember!" The reader, in truth, following closely, scrupulously, this pretty process, cannot help

seeing that after all the boy does not discover the essential point of the problem for himself, that he is more than just guided on his way by the questioning of Socrates, that Plato has chosen an instance in itself illusively clear as being concerned with elementary space. It is once for all, however, that he recognises, under such questioning, the immovable, indefectible certainty of this or that truth of space. So much, the candid reader must concede, is clearly to the advantage of the Pythagorean theory: that even his false guesses have a plausibility, a kinship to, a kind of claim upon, truth, about them: that as he remembers, in logical order (ὡς δεῖ) so he makes the mistakes also which he ought to make—the right sort of mistakes, such as are natural and ought to occur in order to the awakening mind, a kind of properly innate errors. Νῦν αὐτῷ ὥσπερ ὄναρ ἄρτι ἀνακεκίνηνται αἱ δόξαι αὗται—"Just now, as in a dream, these opinions have been stirred up within him;" and he will perform, Socrates assures us, similar acts of reminiscence on demand, with other geometrical problems, with any and every problem whatever.

"If then," observes Socrates in the *Phaedo*, wistfully pondering, for such consolation as there may be in it, in his last hours, the larger outlook suggested by this hopeful doctrine:

"If, having apprehended it (having apprehended a certain mathematical principle, that is) before birth, we were born already possessed of this principle, had we not knowledge, both before and immediately upon our begetting here, not merely about the equal and the greater and the less, but about all other things of the kind? For our theory (of an innate knowledge, that is to say, independent of our experience here) our theory holds not a bit more about two equal lines, than about the absolute Beauty (was he going now to see its very face again, after the dim intermediate life here?) and about what is absolutely just and good, and about all things whatever, upon which, in all our past questioning and answering, we set this seal—οἷς ἐπισφραγιζόμεθα τοῦτο—*That, which really is*." *Phaedo,*. 75.

But to return to the cheerful pages of the *Meno*—from the prison-cell to the old mathematical lecture-room and that psychological experiment upon the young boy with the square—Οὔκουν οὐδένος διδάξαντος, ἀλλ᾽ἐρωτήσαντος, ἐπιστήσεται, ἀναλαβών, αὐτὲξ αὐτοῦ, ἐπιστήμην? "Through no one's teaching, then, but by a process of mere questioning, will he attain a true science, knowledge in the fullest sense (ἐπιστήμη) by the recovery of such science out of himself?"—Yes! and that recovery is an act of reminiscence.

These opinions therefore, the boy's discoverable right notions about side and square and diagonal, were innate in him and surely, as Socrates was observing later; right opinions also concerning other things more important, which too, when stirred up by a process of questioning, will be established in him as consciously reasoned knowledge. That at least is what Plato is quite certain about: not quite so confident, however, regarding another doctrine, fascinating as he finds it, which seemed to afford an explanation of this leading psychological fact of an antecedent knowledge within us—the doctrine namely of *metempsychosis*, of the transmigration of souls through various forms of the bodily life, under a law of moral retribution, somewhat oracularly suggested in the ancient poets, by Hesiod and Pindar, but a matter of formal consciousness with the Pythagoreans, and at last inseparably connected with the authority of Socrates, who in the *Phaedo* discourses at great length on that so comfortable theory, venturing to draw from it, as we saw just now, a personal hope in the immediate prospect of death. The soul, then, would be immortal (ἀθάνατος ἄν ἡ ψυχὴ εἴη) prospectively as well as in retrospect, and is not unlikely to attain to clearer levels of truth "over the way, there," as, in the *Meno*, Socrates drew from it an encouragement to the search for truth, here. Retrospectively, at all events, it seemed plain that "the soul is eternal. It is right therefore to make an effort to find out things one may not know, that is to say, one does not remember, just now." Those notions were *in* the boy, they and the like of them, in all boys and men; and he did not come by them in this life, a young slave in Athens. Ancient, half-obliterated inscriptions on the mental walls, the mental tablet, seeds

of knowledge to come, shed by some flower of it long ago, it was in an earlier period of time they had been laid up in him, to blossom again now, so kindly, so firmly!

Upon a soul thus provided, puzzled as that seed swells within it under the spring-tide influences of this untried atmosphere, it would be the proper vocation of the philosophic teacher to supervene with his encouraging questions. And there was another doctrine—a persuasion still more poetical or visionary, it might seem, yet with a strong presumption of literal truth about it, when seen in connexion with that great fact of our consciousness which it so conveniently explains—"reminiscence." Socrates had heard it, he tells us in the *Meno*, in the *locus classicus* on this matter, from the venerable lips of certain religious persons, priests and priestesses,

"who had made it their business to be able to give an account concerning their sacred functions. Pindar too asserts this, and many other of the poets, so many as were divinely inspired. And what they say is as follows. But do you observe, whether they seem to you to speak the truth. For they say that the soul of man is immortal; and that at one time it comes to a pause, which indeed they call dying, and then is born again; but that it is never destroyed. That on this account indeed it is our duty to pass through life as religiously as possible (because there's 'another world,' namely). 'For those,' says Pindar, 'from whom Persephone shall have received a recompense of ancient wrong—she gives back their soul again to the sun above in the ninth year, of whom are begotten kings, illustrious and swift in strength, and men greatest in wisdom; and for remaining time they are called holy heroes among us.' Inasmuch then as the soul is immortal, and has been born many times, and has seen both things here and things in Hades, and all things, there is nothing that it has not learned; so that it is by no means surprising that it should be able to remember both about virtue and about other matters what it knew at least even aforetime. For inasmuch as the whole of nature is akin to itself (homogeneous) and the soul has learned all things, nothing hinders one, by remembering one thing only, which indeed people call 'learning' (though it is something else in fact, you see!) from

finding out all other things for himself, if he be brave and fail not through weariness in his search. For in truth to seek and to learn is wholly Recollection. Therefore one must not be persuaded by that eristic doctrine (namely that if ignorant in ignorance you must remain) for that on the one hand would make us idle and is a pleasant doctrine for the weak among mankind to hear; while this other doctrine makes us industrious and apt to seek. Trusting in which that it is true, I am willing along with you to seek out virtue—what it is." *Meno*, 81.

These strange theories then are much with Socrates on his last sad day—sad to his friends—as justifying more or less, on ancient religious authority, the instinctive confidence, checking sadness in himself, that he will survive—survive the effects of the poison, of the funeral fire; that somewhere, with some others, with Minos perhaps and other "righteous souls" of the national religion, he will be holding discourses, dialogues, quite similar to these, only a little better as must naturally happen with so diligent a scholar, this time tomorrow.

And that wild thought of *metempsychosis* was connected with a theory, yet more fantastic, of the visible heaven above us. For Pythagoras, the Pythagoreans, had had their views also, as became the possessors of "a first principle" of a philosophy therefore which need leave no problem untouched—on purely material things, above all on the structure of the planets, the mechanical contrivances by which their motion was effected (it came to just that!) on the relation of the earth to its atmosphere and the like. The doctrine of the transmigration, the pilgrimage or mental journeys, of the soul linked itself readily with a fanciful, guesswork astronomy, which provided starry places, wide areas, hostelries, for that wanderer to move or rest in. A matter of very lively and presentable form and colour, as if making the invisible show through, this too pleased the extremely visual fancy of Plato; as we may see, in many places of the *Phaedo*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Timaeus*, and most conspicuously in the tenth book of *The Republic*, where he relates the vision of Er—what he saw of the

other world during a kind of temporary death. Hell, Purgatory, Paradise, are briefly depicted in it; Paradise especially with a quite Dantesque sensibility to coloured light—physical light or spiritual, you can hardly tell which, so perfectly is the inward sense blent with its visible counter-part, reminding one forcibly of the *Divine Comedy*, of which those closing pages of *The Republic* suggest an early outline.

That then is the third element in Plato derivative from his Pythagorean masters: an astronomy of infant minds, we might call it, in which the celestial world is the scene, not as yet of those abstract reasonable laws of number and motion and space, upon which, as Plato himself protests in the seventh book of *The Republic*, it is the business of a veritable science of the stars to exercise our minds, but rather of a machinery, which the mere star-gazer may peep into as best he can, with its levers, its spindles and revolving wheels, its spheres, he says, "like those boxes which fit into one another," and the literal doors "opened in heaven," through which, at the due point of ascension, the revolving pilgrim soul will glide forth and have a chance of gazing into the wide spaces beyond, "as he stands outside on the back of the sky"—that hollow partly transparent sphere which surrounds and closes in our terrestrial atmosphere. Most difficult to follow in detailed description, perhaps not to be taken quite seriously, one thing at least is clear about the planetary movements as Plato and his Pythagorean teachers conceive them. They produce, naturally enough, sounds, that famous "music of the spheres," which the undisciplined ear fails to recognise, to delight in, only because it is never silent.

That it really is impossible after all to learn, to be taught what you are entirely ignorant of, was and still is a fact of experience, manifest especially in regard to music. Now that "music of the spheres" in its largest sense, its completest orchestration, the harmonious order of the whole universe (κόσμος) was what souls had heard of old; found echoes of here; might recover in its entirety, amid the influences of the melodious colour, sounds, manners, the enforced modulating discipline, which would make the whole life of a citizen of the Perfect City an education in music.

We are now with Plato, you see! in his reproduction, so fully detailed for us in *The Republic*, of the earlier and vaguer Pythagorean brotherhood. Musical imagery, the notions of proportion and the like, have ever since Plato wrote played a large part in the theory of morals; have come to seem almost a natural part of language concerning them. Only, wherever in Plato himself you find such imagery, you may note Pythagorean influence.

The student of *The Republic* hardly needs to be reminded how all-pervasive in it that imagery is; how emphatic, in all its speculative theory, in all its practical provisions, is the desire for harmony; how the whole business of education (of *gymnastic* even, the seeming rival of *music*) is brought under it; how large a part of the claims of duty, of right conduct, for the perfectly initiated, comes with him to be this, that it sounds so well. Πλυμμέλειας, discordancy—all faultiness resolves itself into that. "Canst play on this flute?" asks Hamlet—on human nature, with all its stops, of whose capricious tuneableness, or want of tune, he is himself the representative. Well! the perfect state, thinks Plato, can. For him, music is still everywhere in the world, and the whole business of philosophy only as it were the correct editing of it: as it will be the whole business of the state to repress, in the great concert, the jarring self-assertion (πλεονεξία) of those whose voices have large natural power in them. How, in detail, rhythm, the limit (πέρας) is enforced in Plato's *Republic* there is no time to show. Call to mind only that the perfect visible equivalent of such rhythm is in those portrait-statues of the actual youth of Greece—legacy of Greek sculpture more precious by far than its fancied forms of deity—the quoit-player, the *diadumenus*, the *apoxyomenus*; and how the most beautiful type of such youth, by the universal admission of the Greeks themselves, had issued from the severe schools of Sparta, that highest civic embodiment of the Dorian temper, like some perfect musical instrument, perfectly responsive to the intention, to the lightest touch, of the finger of law—Yet with a fresh setting of the old music in each succeeding generation. For in truth we come into the world, each one of us, "not in nakedness," but by the natural course of organic development clothed far more completely than even Pythagoras supposed

in a vesture of the past, nay, fatally shrouded, it might seem, in those laws or tricks of heredity which we mistake for our volitions; in the language which is more than one half of our thoughts; in the moral and mental habits, the customs, the literature, the very houses, which we did not make for ourselves; in the vesture of a past, which is (so science would assure us) not ours, but of the race, the species: that *Zeitgeist*, or abstract secular process, in which, as we could have had no direct consciousness of it, so we can pretend to no future personal interest. It is humanity itself now—abstract humanity—that figures as the transmigrating soul, accumulating into its "colossal manhood" the experience of ages; making use of, and casting aside in its march, the souls of countless individuals, as Pythagoras supposed the individual soul to cast aside again and again its outworn body.

So it may be. There was nothing of all that, however, in the mind of the great English poet at the beginning of this century whose famous Ode on *The Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Childhood*, in which he made *metempsychosis* his own, must still express for some minds something more than merely poetic truth. For Pythagoreanism too, like all the graver utterances of primitive Greek philosophy, is an instinct of the human mind itself, and therefore also a constant tradition in its history, which *will* recur; fortifying this or that soul here or there in a part at least of that old sanguine assurance about itself, which possessed Socrates so immovably, his masters, his disciples. Those who do not already know Wordsworth's Ode ought soon to read it for themselves. Listen instead to the lines which perhaps suggested Wordsworth's *The Retreat*, by Henry Vaughan, one of the so-called Platonist poets of about two centuries ago, who was able to blend those Pythagorean doctrines with the Christian belief, amid which indeed, from the unsanctioned dreams of Origen onwards, those doctrines have shown themselves not otherwise than at home.

Happy, those days, he declares,

Before I understood this place,

Appointed for my second race;
Or taught my soul to fancy ought
But a white celestial thought;
When yet I had not walked above
A mile or two from my first love;
But felt through all this fleshly dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness.
O! how I long to travel back
And tread again that ancient track!
That I might once more reach that plain,
Where first I left my glorious train.
But Ah! my soul with too much stay
Is drunk; and staggers in the way.
Some men a forward motion love,
But I backward steps would move;
And when this dust falls to the urn
In that state I came return.

Summing up those three philosophies antecedent to Plato, we might say, that if Heraclitus taught the doctrine of progress, and the Eleatics that of rest, so, in such quaint phrase as Vaughan's, Pythagoreanism is the philosophy of re-action.

Chapter Four

Plato and Socrates

"Plato," we say habitually when we talk of our teacher in *The Republic*, the *Phaedrus*, cutting a knot; for Plato speaks to us indirectly only, in his Dialogues, by the voice of the Platonic Socrates, a figure most ambiguously compacted of the real Socrates and Plato himself; a purely dramatic invention, it might perhaps have been fancied, or, so to speak, an *idolon theatri*—Plato's self, but presented, with the reserve appropriate to his fastidious genius, in a kind of stage disguise. So we might fancy but for certain independent information we possess about Socrates, in Aristotle, and in the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon.

The Socrates of Xenophon is one of the simplest figures in the world. From the personal memories of that singularly limpid writer the outline of the great teacher detaches itself, as an embodiment of all that was clearest in the now adult Greek understanding, the adult Greek conscience. All that Socrates is seen to be in those unaffected pages may be explained by the single desire to be useful to ordinary young men, whose business in life would be mainly with practical things; and at first sight, as delineators of their common master, Plato and Xenophon might seem scarcely reconcilable. But then, as Alcibiades alleges of him in the *Symposium*, Socrates had been ever in all respects a two-sided being; like some rude figure of Silenus, he suggests, by way of an outer case for the image of a god within. By a mind, of the compass Plato himself supposes, two quite different impressions may well have been made on two typically different observers. The speaker, to Xenophon so simple, almost homely, earthy, vernacular, becomes with Plato the mouth-piece of high and difficult and extraordinary thoughts. In the absence, then, of a single written word from

Socrates himself, the question is forced upon us: had the true Socrates been really *Socrates according to Xenophon*, and all besides only a generous loan from the rich treasury of Plato's quite original and independent genius: or, had the master been indeed something larger and more many-sided than Xenophon could have thoroughly understood, presenting to his simpler disciple only what was of simpler stamp in himself, to the mystic and susceptible Plato all that far-reaching and fervid intellectuality, with which the Platonic Dialogues credit him. It is a problem about which probably no reader of Plato ever quite satisfies himself-how much precisely he must deduct from Socrates, as we find him in those Dialogues, by way of defining to himself the Socrates of fact.

In Plato's own writing about Socrates there is, however, a difference. The *Apology*, marked as being the single writing from Plato's hand not in dialogue form, we may naturally take for a sincere version of the actual words of Socrates; closer to them, we may think, than the Greek record of spoken words however important, the speeches in Thucydides, for instance, by the admission of Thucydides himself, was wont to be. And this assumption is supported by internal evidence. In that unadorned language, in those harsh grammatic (or rather quite ungrammatic) constructions we have surely the natural accent of one speaking under strong excitement. We might think, again, that the *Phaedo*, purporting to record his subsequent discourse, is really no more than such a record, but for a lurking suspicion, which hangs by the fact that Plato, noted as an assistant at the trial, is expressly stated by one of the speakers in the Dialogue to have been absent from the dying scene of Socrates. That speaker however was himself perhaps the veracious reporter of those last words and acts; for there are details in the *Phaedo* too pedestrian and common-place to be taken for things of mere literary invention: the rubbing of the legs, for instance, now released from the chain; the rather uneasy determination to be indifferent; the somewhat harsh committal of the crudely lamenting wife and his child "to any one who will take the trouble"—details, as one cannot but observe in passing, which leave those famous hours, even for purely human, or say!

pagan dignity and tenderness, wholly incomparable to one sacred scene to which they have sometimes been compared.

We shall be justified then, in the effort to give reality or truth to our mental picture of Socrates, if we follow the lead of his own supposed retrospect of his career in the *Apology*, as completed, and explained to wholly sympathetic spirits, by the more intimate discourses of the *Phaedo.*

He pleads to be excused if in making his defence he speaks after his accustomed manner: not merely in home-spun phrase, that is to say, very different from what is usually heard at least in those sophisticated law-courts of Athens, nor merely with certain lapsing into his familiar habit of dialogue, but with a tacit assumption, throughout his arguments, of that logical realism which suggested the first outline of Plato's doctrine of the "ideas." Everywhere, with what is like a physical passion for what *is*, what is *true*—as one engaged in a sort of religious or priestly concentration of soul on what God really made and meant us to know—he is driving earnestly, yet with method, at those universal conceptions or definitions which serve to establish firmly the distinction, attained by so much intellectual labour, between what is absolute and abiding, of veritable import therefore to our reason, to the divine reason really resident in each one of us, resident in, yet separable from, these our houses of clay—between that, and what is only phenomenal and transitory, as being essentially implicate with them. He achieved this end, as we learn from Aristotle, this power, literally, of "a criticism of life," by induction (ἐπαγωγή) by that careful process of enquiry into the facts of the matter concerned, one by one (facts most often of conscience, of moral action as conditioned by motive, and result, and the varying degrees of inward light upon it) for which the fitting method is informal though not unmethodical question and answer, face to face with average mankind, as in those famous Socratic conversations, which again are the first rough natural growth of Plato's so artistic written Dialogues. The exclusive preoccupation of Socrates with practical matter therein, his anxious fixing of the sense of such familiar terms as *just* and *good*, for instance, was part of that humble bearing of himself by which he was to authenticate a claim

to superior wisdom, forced upon him by nothing less than divine authority, while there was something also in it of a natural reaction against the intellectual ambition of his youth. He had gone to school eagerly, as he tells his friends in the *Phaedo*, in his last discourse, to a physical philosopher, then of great repute, but to his own great disappointment:

"In my youth he says I had a wonderful desire for the wisdom which people call natural science—περὶ φύσεως ἱστορίαν. It seemed to me a proud thing to know the causes of every" matter: how it comes to be; ceases to be; why it is. I lost my sight in this enquiry to the degree of unlearning what I had hitherto seemed to myself and others to know clearly enough. But having heard one reading from a book written, as he said, by Anaxagoras, which said that it is Reason that arranges and is the cause of all things, I was delighted with this *cause*, and thought to myself, if this be so, then it does with each what may be best for it. Thus considering, it was with joy I fancied I had found me a teacher about the cause—Anaxagoras: that he would show me for instance, first, whether the earth was round or flat; and then that it was best for it to be so: and if he made these points clear I was prepared to ask for no other sort of causes." *Phaedo*, 96.

Well! Socrates proceeds to the great natural philosopher, and is immensely discouraged to find him after all making very little use of Reason in his explanation why natural things are thus and not otherwise; explaining everything, rather, by secondary and mechanical causes. "It was as if," he concludes, "some one had undertaken to prove that Socrates does everything through Reason; and had gone on to show that it was because my body is constructed in a certain way, of certain bones and muscles, that Socrates is now sitting here in the prison, voluntarily awaiting death."

The disappointment of Socrates with the spirit in which Anaxagoras actually handled and applied that so welcome sapiential proposition that Reason πάντα διακόσμει, καὶ πάντων αἴτιός ἐστιν—arranges and is the cause of all things—is but an

example of what often happens when men seek an *a posteriori* justification of their instinctive prepossessions. Once for all he turns from useless, perhaps impious, enquiries, into the material structure of the stars above him, or the earth beneath his feet, from all physical enquiry into material things, to the direct knowledge of man, the cosmical order in man, as it may be found by any one who, in good faith with himself, and with devout attention, looks within. In this precise sense it was that, according to the old saying, Socrates brought philosophy down from heaven to earth. Montaigne, the great humanist, expands it: "'Twas he who brought again from heaven, where she lost her time, human wisdom, to restore her to man with whom her most just and greatest business lies. He has done human nature a great service," he adds, "in showing it how much it can do of itself." And a singular incident gave that piercing study, that relentless exposure, of himself, and of others, for the most part so unwelcome to them, a religious or mystic character. He has a "vocation" thus to proceed, has been literally "called," as he understands, by the central religious authority of Greece. His seemingly invidious testing of men's pretensions to know, is a sacred service to the God of Delphi, which he dares not neglect. And his fidelity herein had in turn the effect of reinforcing for him, and bringing to a focus, all the other rays of religious light cast at random in the world about him, or in himself.

"You know Chasrephon," he says, "his eagerness about any matter he takes up. Well! once upon a time he went to Delphi, and ventured to ask of the oracle whether any man living was wiser than I; and, amazing as it seems, the Pythia answered that there was no one wiser than I." Socrates must go in order, then, to every class of persons pre-eminent for knowledge; to every one who seems to know more than he. He found them—the Athenian poets, for instance, the potters who made the vases we, admire, undeniably in possession of much delightful knowledge unattained by him. But one and all they were ignorant of the limitations of their knowledge; and at last he concludes that the oracle had but meant to say: "He indeed is the wisest of all men who like Socrates

is aware that he is really worth little or nothing in respect of knowledge." Such consciousness of ignorance was the proper wisdom of man.

That can scarcely be a fiction. His wholesome appeal then, everywhere, from what seems, to what really is, is a service to the Delphic god, the god of sanity. To prove that the oracle had been right after all, improbable as it seemed, in the signal honour it had put upon him, would be henceforward his proper business. Committing him to a sort of ironical humility towards others, at times seemingly petty and prosaic, certainly very irritating, in regard to himself, in its source and motive, his business in life as he conceived it was nothing less than a divine possession. He becomes therefore literally an enthusiast for knowledge, for the knowledge of man; such knowledge as by a right method of questioning, of self-questioning (the master's questioning being after all only a kind of mid-wife's assistance, according to his own homely figure) may be brought to birth in every human soul, concerning itself and its experience; what is real, and stable, in its apprehensions of Piety, Beauty, Justice, and the like, what is of dynamic quality in them, as conveying force into what one does or creates, building character, generating virtue. Αὐτὸ καθ'αὑτζητεῖν τί ποτ'ἔστιν ἀρετή—to seek out what virtue is, itself, in and by itself—there's the task. And when we have found that, we shall know already, or easily get to know, everything else about and about it: "how we are to come by virtue," for instance.

Well! largely by knowing, says naturally the enthusiast for knowledge. There is no good thing which knowledge does not comprehend—Μηδέν ἐστιν ἀγαθὸν ὅ οὐκ ἐπιστήμη περιέχει—a strenuously ascertained knowledge however, painfully adjusted to other forms of knowledge which may seem inconsistent with it, and impenetrably distinct from any kind of complaisant or only half-attentive conjecture. "One and the same species in every place: whole and sound: one, in regard to, and through, and upon, all particular instances of it: catholic:"[2] it will be all this—the *Virtue*, for instance, which we must seek, as a hunter his sustenance, seek and find and never lose again, through a survey of all the many variable and merely relative virtues, which!

are but relative, that is to say, "to every several act, and to each period of life, in regard to each thing we have to do, in each one of us"—καθ'ἑκάστην των πράξεων, καὶ των ἡλικιων πρὸς ἕκαστον ἔργον, ἑκάστῳ ἡμων. "That, about which I don't know what it is, how should I know what sort of a thing it is"—ὃ μὴ οἶδα τί ἐστι, πως ἂν ὁποῖόν γέ τι εἰδείην; what its ποιότητες, its qualities, are? "Do you suppose that one who does not know Meno, for example, at all, who he is, can know whether he is fair and rich and well-born, or the reverse of all that?" Yes! already for Socrates, we might say, to know what Justice or Piety or, Beauty really is, will be like the knowledge of a person; only that, as Aristotle carefully notes, his scrupulous habit of search for universal, or catholic, definitions (καθ' ὅλου) was after all but an instrument for the plain knowledge of facts. Strange! out of the practical cautions of Socrates for the securing of clear and correct and sufficient conceptions about one's actual experience, for the attainment of a sort of thoroughly educated common-sense, came the mystic intellectualism of Plato—Platonism, with all its hazardous flights of soul.

A rich contributor to the philosophic consciousness of Plato, Socrates was perhaps of larger influence still on the religious soul in him. As Plato accepted from the masters of Elea the theoretic principles of all natural religion—the principles of a reasonable monotheism, so from Socrates he derived its indispensable morality. It was Socrates who first of pagans comprised in one clear consciousness the authentic rudiments of such natural religion, and gave them clear utterance. Through him, Parmenides had conveyed to Plato the notion of a "Perfect Being," to brace and satisfy the abstracting intellect; but it was from Socrates himself Plato had learned those correspondent practical pieties, which tranquillise and re-assure the soul, together with the genial hopes which cheer the great teacher on the day of his death.

Loyal to the ancient beliefs, the ancient usages, of the religion of many gods which he had found all around him, Socrates pierces through it to one unmistakable person, of perfect intelligence, power and goodness, who takes note of him. In the course of his seventy years he has adjusted that thought of the invisible to the

general facts and to many of the subtler complexities of man's experience in the world of sight. *Sitivit anima mea*, the Athenian philosopher might say, *in Deum*, *in Deum vivum*, as he was known at Sion. He has at least measured devoutly the place, this way and that, which a religion of infallible authority must fill; has already by implication concurred in it; and in fact has his reward at this depressing hour, as the action of the poison mounts slowly to the centre of his material existence. He is more than ready to depart to what before one has really crossed their threshold must necessarily seem the cold and empty spaces of the world no bodily eye can ever look on.

But, he is asked, if the prospect be indeed so cheerful, at all events for the just, why is it forbidden to seize such an advantage as death must be by self-destruction?—Τοῖς ἀνθώποις, μὴ ὅσιον εἶναι, αὐτοὺς ἑαυτοὺς εὐποιεῖν, ἀλλ᾽ ἄλλον δεῖ μένειν εὐεργέτην. His consistent piety straightway suggests the solution of that paradox: we are the property, slaves, of the gods. Now no slave has any sort of right to destroy himself; to take a life that does not really belong to him. Comfort himself and his friends, however, as he may, it does tax all his resources of moral and physical courage to do what is at last required of him: and it was something quite new, unseen before in Greece, inspiring a new note in literature—this attitude of Socrates in the condemned cell, where, fulfilling his own prediction, multitudes, of a wisdom and piety, after all, so different from his, have ever since assisted so admiringly, this anticipation of the Christian way of dying for an opinion, when, as Plato says simply, he consumed the poison in the prison—τὸ φάρμακον ἔπιεν ἐν τῷ δεσμωτηρίῳ. It was amid larger consolations, we must admit, that Christian heroes did that kind of thing. But bravery, you need hardly be reminded, was ever one of the specially characteristic virtues of the pagan world-loyalty even unto death. It had been loyalty however hitherto to one's country, one's home in the world, one's visible companions; not to a wholly invisible claimant, in this way, upon one, upon one's self.

Socrates, with all his singleness of purpose, had been, as Alcibiades suggested, by natural constitution a twofold power, an

embodied paradox. The infinitely significant Socrates of Plato, and the quite simple Socrates of Xenophon, may have been indeed the not incompatible oppositions of a nature, from the influence of which, as a matter of fact, there emerged on one hand the Cynic, on the other the Cyrenaic School, embodying respectively those opposed austerities and amenities of character, which, according to the temper of this or that disciple, had seemed to predominate in their common master. And so the courage which declined to act as almost any one else would have acted in that matter of the legal appeal which might have mitigated the penalty of death, bringing to its appropriate end a life whose main power had been an unrivalled independence, was contrasted in Socrates, paradoxically, with a genuine diffidence about his own convictions which explains some peculiarities in his manner of teaching. The irony, the humour, for which he was famous—the unfailing humour which some have found in his very last words—were not merely spontaneous personal traits, or tricks of manner; but an essential part of the dialectical apparatus, as affording a means of escape from responsibility, convenient for one who has scruples about the fitness of his own thoughts for the reception of another, doubts as to the power of words to convey thoughts, such as he thinks cannot after all be properly conveyed to another, but only awakened, or brought to birth in him, out of himself—who can tell with what distortions in that secret place? For we judge truth not by the intellect exclusively, and on reasons that can be adequately embodied in propositions; but with the whole complex man. Observant therefore of the capricious results of mere teaching, to the last he protests, dissemblingly, and with that irony which is really one phase of the Socratic humour, that in his peculiar function there have been in very deed neither teacher nor learners.

The voice, the sign from heaven, that "new deity" he was accused of fabricating (his singularly profound sense of a mental phenomenon which is probably not uncommon) held perhaps of the same characteristic habit of mind. It was neither the playful pretence which some have supposed; nor yet an insoluble mystery; but only what happens naturally to a really diffident spirit in

great and still more in small matters which at this or that taxing moment seem to usurp the determination of great issues. Such a spirit may find itself beset by an inexplicable reluctance to do what would be most natural in the given circumstances. And for a religious nature, apt to trace the divine assistance everywhere, it was as if, in those perilous moments—well! as if one's guardian angel held one back. A quite natural experience took the supernatural hue of religion; which, however, as being concerned now and then with some circumstance in itself trifling, might seem to lapse at times into superstition.

And as he was thus essentially twofold in character, so Socrates had to contend against two classes of enemies. "An offence" to the whole tribe of Sophists, he was hated also by those who hated them, by the good old men of Athens, whose conservatism finds its representative in Aristophanes, and who saw in the Socratic challenge of first principles, in that ceaseless testing of the origin and claims of what all honest people might seem to take for granted, only a further development of the pernicious function of the Sophists themselves, by the most subtly influential of them all. If in the *Apology* he proves that the fathers of sons had no proper *locus standi* against him, still, in the actual conduct of his defence, as often in Plato's Dialogues, there is (the candid reader cannot but admit it) something of sophistry, of the casuist. Claiming to be but a simple argument, the Apology of Socrates moves sometimes circuitously, after the manner of one who really has to make the worse appear the better reason (τὸν ἥττω λόγον κρείττω ποιεῖν) and must needs use a certain kind of artificial, or ingenious, or *ad captandum* arguments, such as would best have been learned in the sophistic school. Those young Athenians whom he was thought to have corrupted of set purpose, he had not only admired but really loved and understood; and as a consequence had longed to do them real good, chiefly by giving them that interest in themselves which is the first condition of any real power over others. To make Meno, Polus, Charmides, really interested in himself, to help him to the discovery of that wonderful new world here at home—in this effort, even more than in making them interested in other people and things, lay and still lies (it is

no sophistical paradox!) the central business of education. Only, the very thoroughness of the sort of self-knowledge he promoted had in it something sacramental, so to speak; if it did not do them good, must do them considerable harm; could not leave them just as they were. He had not been able in all cases to expand "the better self," as people say, in those he influenced. Some of them had really become very insolent questioners of others, as also of a wholly legitimate authority within themselves; and had but passed from bad to worse. That fatal necessity had been involved of coming to years of discretion. His claim to have been no teacher at all, to be irresponsible in regard to those who had in truth been his very willing disciples, was but humorous or ironical; and as a consequence there was after all a sort of historic justice in his death.

"The fate of Socrates (says Hegel, in his peculiar manner) is tragic in the essential sense, and not merely in that superficial sense of the word according to which every misfortune is called 'tragic.' In the latter sense, one might say of Socrates that because he was condemned to death unjustly his fate was tragic. But in truth innocent suffering of that sort is merely pathetic, not tragic; inasmuch as it is not within the sphere of reason. Now suffering—misfortune—comes within the sphere of reason, only if it is brought about by the free-will of the subject, who must be entirely moral and justifiable; as must be also the power against which that subject proceeds. This power must be no merely natural one, nor the mere will of a tyrant; because it is only in such case that the man is himself, so to speak, guilty of his misfortune. In genuine tragedy, then, they must be powers both alike moral and justifiable, which, from this side and from that, come into collision; and such was the fate of Socrates. His fate therefore is not merely personal, and as it were part of the romance of an individual: it is the general fate, in all its tragedy—the tragedy of Athens, of Greece, which is therein carried out. Two opposed Rights come forth: the one breaks itself to pieces against the other: in this way, both alike suffer loss; while both alike are justified the one towards the other: not as if this were right; that other

wrong. On the one side is the religious claim, the unconscious moral habit: the other principle, over against it, is the equally religious claim—the claim of the consciousness, of the reason, creating a world out of itself, the claim to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The latter remains the common principle of philosophy for all time to come. And these are the two principles which come forth over against each other, in the life and in the philosophy of Socrates." *Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. ii. p. 102.

"I can easily conceive Socrates in the place of Alexander," says Montaigne, again, "but Alexander in the place of Socrates I cannot;" and we may take that as typical of the immense credit of Socrates, even with a vast number of people who have not really known much about him. "For the sake of no long period of years," says Socrates himself, now condemned to death—the few years for which a man of seventy is likely to remain here—

"You will have a name, Men of Athens! and liability to reproach from those who desire to malign the city of Athens—that ye put Socrates to death, a wise man. For in very truth they will declare me to have been wise—those who wish to discredit you—even though I be not. Now had you waited a little while this thing would have happened for you in the course of nature. For ye see my estate: that it is now far onward on the road of life, hard by death." *Apology,* 38.

Plato, though present at the trial, was absent when Socrates "consumed the poison in the prison." Prevented by sickness, as Cebes tells us in the *Phaedo*, Plato would however almost certainly have heard from him, or from some other of that band of disciples who assisted at the last utterances of their master, the sincerest possible account of all that was then said and done. Socrates had used the brief space which elapsed before the officers removed him to the place, "whither he must go, to die" (οὶ ἑλθόντα με δεῖ τεθνάναι) to discourse with those who still lingered in the court precisely on what are called "The four last

things." Arrived at the prison a further delay awaited him, in consequence (it was so characteristic of the Athenian people!) of a religious scruple. The ship of sacred annual embassy to Apollo at Delos was not yet returned to Athens; and the consequent interval of time might not be profaned by the death of a criminal. Socrates himself certainly occupies it religiously enough by a continuation of his accustomed, discourses, touched now with the deepening solemnity of the moment.

The *Phaedo* of Plato has impressed most readers as a veritable record of those last discourses of Socrates; while in the details of what then happened, the somewhat prosaic account there given of the way in which the work of death was done, we find what there would have been no literary satisfaction in inventing; his indifferent treatment, for instance, of the wife, who had not been very dutiful but was now in violent distress—treatment in marked contrast, it must be observed again, with the dignified tenderness of a later scene, as recorded in the Gospels.

An inventor, with mere literary effect in view, at this and other points would have invented differently. "The prison," says Cebes, the chief disciple in the *Phaedo*, "was not far from the court-house; and there we were used to wait every day till we might be admitted to our master. One morning we were assembled earlier than usual; for on the evening before we heard that the ship was returned from Delos. The porter coming out bade us tarry till he should call us. For, he said, the Eleven are now freeing Socrates from his bonds, announcing to him that he must die today."

They were very young men, we are told, who were with Socrates, and how sweetly, kindly, approvingly, he listened to their so youthfully sanguine discussion on the immortality of the soul. For their sakes rather than his own he is ready to treat further, by way of *a posteriori* arguments, a belief which in himself is matter of invincible natural prepossession. In the court he had pleaded at the most for suspended judgment on that question; "If I claimed on any point to be wiser than any one else it would be in this, that having no adequate knowledge of things in Hades so I do not fancy I know." But, in the privacy of these last hours, he is confident in his utterance on the subject which is so much in the minds

of the youths around him; his arguments like theirs being in fact very much of the nature of the things poets write (ποιηματα) or almost like those medicinable fictions (ψευδη ἐν φαρμάκου εἴδει) such as are of legitimate use by the expert. That the soul (beautiful Pythagorean thought!) is a harmony; that there are reasons why this particular harmony should not cease, like that of the lyre or the harp, with the destruction of the instrument which produced it; why this sort of flame should not go out with the upsetting of the lamp—such are the arguments, sometimes little better than verbal ones, which pass this way and that around the death-bed of Socrates, as they still occur to men's minds. For himself, whichever way they tend, they come and go harmlessly, about an immovable personal conviction, which, as he says, "came to me apart from demonstration, with a sort of natural likelihood and fitness": (Μοὶ γέγονεν ἄνευ ἀποδείξεως). The formula of probability could not have been more aptly put. It is one of those convictions which await, it may be, stronger, better, arguments than are forthcoming; but will wait for them with unfailing patience. "The soul therefore Cebes," since such provisional arguments must be allowed to pass, "is something sturdy and strong (ἰσχυρόν τι ἔστιν) imperishable by accident or wear; and we shall really exist in Hades." Indulging a little further the "poetry turned logic" of those youthful assistants, Socrates too, even Socrates, who had always turned away so persistently from what he thought the vanity of the eye, just before the bodily eye finally closes, and his last moment being now at hand, ascends to, or declines upon, the fancy of a quite visible paradise awaiting him.

"It is said that the world, if one gaze down on it from above, is to look on like those leathern balls of twelve pieces, variegated in divers colours, of which the colours here—those our painters use—are as it were samples. There, thewhole world is formed of such, and far brighter and purer than they; part sea-purple of a wonderful beauty; a part like gold; a part whiter than alabaster or snow; aye, composed thus of other colours also of like quality, of greater loveliness than ours—colours we have never seen. For even those hollows in it, being filled with air and water, present a certain

species of colour gleaming amid the diversity of the others; so that it presents one continuous aspect of varied hues. Thus it is: and conformably tree and flower and fruit are put forth and grow. The mountains again and the rocks, after the same manner, have a smoothness and transparency and colours lovelier than here. The tiny precious stones we prize so greatly are but morsels of themsards and jasper and emerald and the rest. No baser kind of thing is to be found in that world, but finer rather. The cause of which is that the rocks there are pure, not gnawed away and corrupted like ours by rot and brine, through the moistures which drain together here, bringing disease and deformity to rocks and earth as well as to living things. There are many living creatures in the land besides men and women, some abiding inland, and some on the coasts of the air, as we by the sea, others in the islands amidst its waves; for, in a word, what the water of the sea is to us for our uses, that the air is to them. The blending of the seasons there is such that they have no sickness and come to years more numerous far than ours: while for sight and scent and hearing and the like they stand as far from us, as air from water, in respect of purity, and the asther from air. There are thrones moreover and temples of the gods among them, wherein in very deed the gods abide; voices and oracles and sensible apprehensions of them; and occasions of intercourse with their very selves. The sun, the moon and the stars they see as they really are; and are blessed in all other matters agreeably thereto." *Phaedo*, 110.

The great assertor of the abstract, the impalpable, the unseen, at any cost, shows there a mastery of visual expression equal to that of his greatest disciple—Ah, good master! was the eye so contemptible an organ of knowledge after all?

Plato was then about twenty-eight years old; a rich young man, rich also in intellectual gifts; and what he saw and heard from and about Socrates afforded the correction his opulent genius needed, and made him the most serious of writers. In many things he was as unlike as possible to the teacher—rude and rough as some failure of his own old sculptor's workshop—who might seem in his

own person to have broken up the harmonious grace of the Greek type, and carried people one step into a world already in reaction against the easy Attic temper, a world in which it might be necessary to go far below the surface for the beauty of which those homely lips had discoursed so much. Perhaps he acted all the more surely as a corrective force on Plato, henceforward an opponent of the obviously successful mental habits of the day, with an unworldliness which, a personal trait in Plato himself there acquired, will ever be of the very essence of Platonism. "Many are called, but few chosen:" Ναρθφκοφόροι μὲν πολλοί, βακχοι δέ τε παῦροι. He will have, as readers of *The Republic* know, a hundred precepts of self-repression for others—the self-repression of every really tuneable member of a chorus; and he begins by almost effacing himself. All that is best and largest in his own matured genius he identifies with his master; and when we speak of Plato generally what we are really thinking of is the Platonic Socrates.

Chapter Five

Plato and the Sophists

"Sophist," professional enemy of Socrates—it became, chiefly through the influence of Plato, inheriting, expanding, the preferences and antipathies of his master, a bad name. Yet it had but indicated, by a quite natural verbal formation, the class of persons through whom, in the most effectual manner, supply met demand, the demand for education, asserted by that marvellously ready Greek people, when the youthful mind in them became suddenly aware of the coming of virile capacity, and they desired to be made by rules of art better speakers, better writers and accountants, than any merely natural, unassisted gifts, however fortunate, could make them. While the peculiar religiousness of Socrates had induced in him the conviction that he was something less than a wise man, a philosopher only, a mere seeker after such wisdom as he might after all never attain, here were the σοφισταί, the experts—wise men, who proposed to make other people as wise as themselves, wise in that sort of wisdom regarding which we can really test others, and let them test us, not with the merely approximate results of the Socratic method, but with the exactness we may apply to processes understood to be mechanical, or to the proficiency of quite young students (such as in fact the Sophists were dealing with) by those examinations which are so sufficient in their proper place. It had been as delightful as learning a new game—that instruction, in which you could measure your daily progress by brilliant feats of skill. Not only did the parents of those young students pay readily large sums for their instruction in what it was found so useful to know, above all in the art of public speaking, of self-defence, that is to say, in democratic Athens where one's personal *status* was become so inse-

cure; but the young students themselves felt grateful for their institution in what told so immediately on their fellows; for help in the comprehension of the difficult sentences of another, or the improvement of one's own; for the accomplishments which enabled them in that busy competitive world to push their fortunes each one for himself a little further, and quite innocently. Of course they listened.

"Love not the world!"—that, on the other hand, was what Socrates had said, or seemed to say; though in truth he too meant only to teach them how by a more circuitous but surer way to possess themselves of it. And youth, naturally curious and for the most part generous, willing to undergo much for the mere promise of some good thing it can scarcely even imagine, had been ready to listen to him too; the sons of rich men most often, by no means to the dissatisfaction of Socrates himself, though he never touched their money; young men who had amplest leisure for the task of perfecting their souls, in a condition of religious luxury, as we should perhaps say. As was evident in the court-house at the trial of the great teacher, to the eyes of older citizens who had not come under his personal influence, there had been little to distinguish between Socrates and his professional rivals. Socrates in truth was a Sophist; but more than a Sophist. Both alike handled freely matters that to the fathers had seemed beyond question; encouraged what seemed impious questioning in the sons; had set "the hearts of the sons against the fathers;" and some instances there were in which the teaching of Socrates had been more conspicuously ruinous than theirs. "If you ask people at Athens," says Socrates in the *Meno*, "how virtue is to be attained, they will laugh in your face and say they don't so much as know what virtue is." And who was responsible for that? Certainly that Dialogue, proposing to discover the essential nature of virtue, by no means re-establishes one's old prepossessions about it in the vein of Simonides, or Pindar, or one's elders. Sophist, and philosopher; Protagoras, and Socrates; so far, their effect was the same-to the horror of fathers, to put the minds of the sons in motion regarding matters it were surely best to take as settled once and

for ever. What then after all was the insuperable difference between Socrates and those rival teachers, with whom he had nevertheless so much in common, bent like him so effectively, so zealously, on that new study of man, of human nature and the moral world, to the exclusion of all useless "meteoric or subterranean enquiries" into things. As attractive as himself to ingenuous youth, uncorrupt surely in its early intentions, why did the Sophists seem to Socrates to be so manifestly an instrument of its corruption?

"The citizen of Athens," observed that great Athenian statesman of the preceding age, in whom, as a German philosopher might say, the mobile soul of Athens became conscious—"The citizen of Athens seems to me to present himself in his single person to the greatest possible variety (πλεῖστα εἴδη) of thought and action, with the utmost degree of versatility." As we saw, the example of that mobility, that daring mobility, of character has seemed to many the special contribution of the Greek people to advancing humanity. It was not however of the Greek people in general that Pericles was speaking at the beginning of the Peloponnesian war, but of Athens in particular; of Athens, that perfect flower of Ionian genius, in direct contrast to, and now in bitter rivalry with, Sparta, the perfect flower of the Dorian genius. All through Greek history, as we also saw, in connexion with Plato's opposition to the philosophy of motion, there may be traced, in every sphere of the activity of the Greek mind, the influence of those two opposing tendencies—the centrifugal and the centripetal tendencies, as we may perhaps not too fancifully call them.

There is the centrifugal, the irresponsible, the Ionian or Asiatic, tendency; flying from the centre, working with little forethought straight before it in the development of every thought and fancy; throwing itself forth in endless play of undirected imagination; delighting in colour and brightness, moral or physical; in beautiful material, in changeful form everywhere, in poetry, in music, in architecture and its subordinate crafts, in philosophy itself. In the social and political order it rejoices in the freest action of local and personal influences: its restless versatility drives

it towards the assertion of the principles of individualism, of separatism—the separation of state from state, the maintenance of local religions, the development of the individual in that which is most peculiar and individual in him. Shut off land-wards from the primitive sources of those many elements it was to compose anew, shut off from all the rest of the world, to which it presented but one narrow entrance pierced through that rock of Tempe, so narrow that "in the opinion of the ancients it might be defended by a dozen men against all comers," it did recompose or fuse those many diverse elements into one absolutely original type. But what variety within! Its very claim was in its grace of *movement*, its freedom and easy happiness, its lively interests, the variety of its gifts to civilisation; but its weakness is self-evident, and was what had made the political unity of Greece impossible. The Greek spirit!—it might have become a hydra, to use Plato's own figure, a monster; the hand developing hideously into a hundred hands, or heads.

This inorganic, this centrifugal, tendency, Plato was desirous to cure by maintaining over against it the Dorian influence of a severe simplification everywhere, in society, in culture, in the very physical nature of man. An enemy everywhere, though through acquired principle indeed rather than by instinct, to variegation, to what is cunning, or "myriad-minded" (as we say of Shakespeare, as Plato thinks of Homer) he sets himself in mythology, in literature, in every kind of art, in the art of life, as if with conscious metaphysical opposition to the metaphysic of Heraclitus, to enforce the ideal of a sort of Parmenidean abstractness, and monotony or calm.

This, perhaps exaggerated, ideal of Plato is however only the exaggeration of that salutary, strictly European tendency, which, finding human mind, the human reason cool and sane, to be the most absolutely real and precious thing in the world, enforces everywhere the impress of its reasonable sanity; its candid reflexions upon things as they really are; its sense of logical proportion. It is that centripetal tendency, again, which links the individual units together, states to states, one period of organic growth

to another, under the reign of a strictly composed, self-conscious order, in the universal light of the understanding.

Whether or not this temper, so clearly traceable as a distinct rival influence in the course of Greek development, was indeed the peculiar gift of the Dorian race, certainly that race, as made known to us especially in Lacedaemon, is the best illustration of it, in its love of order, of that severe composition everywhere, of which the Dorian style of architecture is as it were a material symbol, in its constant aspiration after what is dignified and earnest, as exemplified most evidently in the religion of its preference, the religion of Apollo.

Now the key to Plato's view of the Sophists, Gorgias, Protagoras, Hippias, Prodicus, with their less brilliant followers—chosen educators of the public—is that they do but fan and add fuel to the fire in which Greece, as they wander like ardent missionaries about it, is naming itself away. Teaching in their large, fashionable, expensive schools, so triumphantly well, the arts one needed most in so busy an age, they were really developing further and reinforcing the ruinous fluidity of the Greek, and especially of the Athenian people, by turning it very adroitly into a conscious method, a practical philosophy, an art of life itself, in which all those specific arts would be but subsidiary—an all-supplementing *ars artium*, a master-art, or, in depreciatory Platonic mood one might say, an artifice, or, cynically, a trick. The great sophist was indeed the Athenian public itself, Athens, as the willing victim of its own gifts, its own flamboyancy, well-nigh worn out now by the mutual friction of its own parts, given over completely to hazardous political experiment with the irresponsibility which is ever the great vice of democracy, ever ready to float away anywhither, to misunderstand, or forget, or discredit, its own past.

"Or do you too hold like the many (asks Socrates in the sixth book of *The Republic*) that a certain number are corrupted by sophists in their youth; and that certain sophists, irresponsible persons, corrupt them to any extent worth noting; and not rather that those who say these things are the greatest sophists; that they

train to perfection, and turn out both old and young, men and women, just as they choose them to be?—When, pray?—He asked—When seated together in their thousands at the great assemblies, or in the law-courts, or the theatres, or the camp, or any other common gathering of the public, with much noise the majority praise this and blame that in what is said and done, both alike in excess, shouting and clapping; and the very rocks too and the place in which they are, echoing around, send back redoubled that clamour ot praise and blame. In such case, what heart as they say, what heart, think you, can the young man keep? or what private education he may have had hold out for him that it be not over-flooded by praise or blame like that, and depart away, borne down the stream, whithersoever that may carry it, and that he pronounce not the same thing as they fair or foul; and follow the same ways as they, and become like them?" *Republic*, 492.

The veritable sophist then, the dynamic sophist, was the Athenian public of the day; those ostensible or professional Sophists being not so much its intellectual directors as the pupils or followers of it. They did but make it, as the French say, abound the more in its own sense, like the keeper (it is Plato's own image) of some wild beast, which he knows how to command by a well-considered obedience to all its varying humours. If the Sophists are partly the cause they are still more the effect of the social environment. They had discovered, had ascertained with much acuteness, the actual momentum of the society which maintained them, and they meant only, by regulating, to maintain it. Protagoras, the chief of Sophists, had avowedly applied to ethics the physics or metaphysics of Heraclitus. And now it was as if the disintegrating Heraclitean fire had taken hold on actual life, on men's very thoughts, on the emotions and the will.

That so faulty natural tendency, as Plato holds it to be, in the world around them, they formulate carefully as its proper conscious theory: a theory how things must, nay, ought, to be. "Just that," they seem to say—"Just that versatility, that mutable spirit, shall become by adoption the child of knowledge, shall be carefully nurtured, brought to great fortune. We'll make you, and your

thoughts, as fluid, as shifty, as things themselves: will bring you, like some perfectly accomplished implement, to this *carrière ouverte*, this open quarry, for the furtherance of your personal interests in the world." And if old-fashioned principle or prejudice be found in the way, who better than they could instruct one, not how to minimise, or violate it—that was not needed, nor perhaps desirable, regarding what was so useful for the control of others-not that; but, to apply the intellectual solvent to it, in regard to one's self? "It will break up—this or that ethical deposit in your mind. Ah! very neatly, very prettily, and disappear, when exposed to the action of our perfected method. Of credit with the vulgar as such, in the solitary chamber of the aristocratic mind such presuppositions, prejudicies or principles, may be made very soon to know their place."

Yes! says Plato (for a moment we may anticipate what is at least the spirit of his answer) but there are some presuppositions after all, which it will make us very vulgar to have dismissed from us. "There are moreover," those others proceed to say, "teachers of persuasion (πειθοῦς διδάσκαλοι) who impart skill in popular and forensic oratory; and so by fair means or by unfair we shall gain our ends." It is with the δῆμος, with the vulgar, insubordinate, tag-rag of one's own nature—how to rule that, by obeying it-that these professors of rhetoric begin. They are still notwithstanding the only teachers of morals ingenuous Greece is aware of; and wisdom, as seems likely, "must die with them!"

"Some very small number then (says the Platonic Socrates) is left, of those who in worthy fashion hold converse with philosophy: either, it may be, some soul of in-born worth and well brought up, to which it has happened to be exiled in a foreign land, holding to philosophy by a tie of nature, and through lack of those who will corrupt it; or when it may chance that a great soul comes to birth in an insignificant state, to the politics of which it gives no heed, because it thinks them despicable: perhaps a certain fraction also, of good parts, may come to philosophy from some other craft, through a just contempt of that. The bridle too of our companion Theages has a restraining power. For in the case of Theages

also, all the other conditions were in readiness to his falling away from philosophy; but the nursing of his sickly body, excluding him from politics, keeps him back. Our own peculiarity is not worth speaking of—the sign from heaven! for I suppose it has occurred to scarce anyone before. And so, those who have been of this number, and have tasted how sweet and blessed the possession is; and again, having a full view of the folly of the many, and that no one, I might say, effects any sound result in what concerns the state, or is an ally in whose company one might proceed safe and sound to the help of the just, but that, like a man falling among wild beasts, neither willing to share their evil deeds, nor sufficient by himself to resist the whole fierce band, flung away before he shall have done any service to the city or to his own friends, he would become useless both to himself and to others: taking all this into consideration, keeping silence and doing his own business, as one standing aside under a hedge in some storm of dust and spray beneath a driven wind, seeing those about him replete with lawlessness, he is content if by any means, pure from injustice and unholy deeds, himself shall live through his life here, and in turn make his escape with good hope, in cheerful and kindly mood. (What long sentences Plato writes!) Yet in truth, he said, he would make his escape after not the least of achievements—Nor yet the greatest, I observed, because he did not light upon the polity fitted for him: for, in that fitting polity, himself will grow to completer stature, and, together with what belongs to him, he will be the saviour also of the commonwealth." *Republic*, 496.

Over against the Sophists, and the age which has sophisticated them, of which they are the natural product, Plato, being himself of a genius naturally rich, florid, complex, excitable, but adding to the utmost degree of Ionian sensibility an effectual desire towards the Dorian order and *ascesis*, asserts everywhere the principle of outline, in political and moral life; in the education which is to fit men for it; in the music which is one half of that education, in the philosophy which is its other half-the "philosophy of the ideas," of those eternally fixed outlines of our thought, which

correspond to, nay, are actually identical with, the eternally fixed outlines of things themselves. What the difference (difference in regard to continuity and clearness) really is between the conditions of mind, in which respectively the sophistic process, and the genuinely philosophical or dialectic process, as no conceived by Plato, leave us, is well illustrated by the peculiar treatment of Justice, its proper definition or idea, in *The Republic.* Justice (or Righteousness, as we say, more largely) under the light of a comprehensive experience of it, carefully, diligently, adjusted to the nature of man on the one hand, of society on the other, becomes in the fourth book of *The Republic*, Τὸ τὰ αυτοῦ πράττειν—The doing, by every part, in what is essentially a whole consisting of parts, of its own proper business therein. That, is a notion of Righteousness made familiar to us by Saint Paul, and in Plato holds somewhat of his Pythagorean predecessors. It is the execution, neither more nor less, by every performer, of his own part in a musical exercise; or, in a physical organism, the execution by every faculty of its own function, neither more nor less: it is harmony: it is health—Τὸ τὰ αυτοῦ πράττειν . There, then, is the eternal outline of Righteousness or Justice as it really is, equally clear and indefectible at every point; a definition of it which can by no supposition become a definition of anything else; impenetrable, not to be traversed, by any possible definition of Injustice; securing an essential value to its possessor, independently of all falsities of appearance; and leaving Justice, as it really is in itself, unaffected even by phenomena so mis-representative of it as to deceive the very gods, or many good men, as happened pre-eminently in the case of Socrates.

Here then is the reply of the Platonic Socrates to the challenge that he should prove himself master of a more certain philosophy than that of the people, as represented by the old gnomic poet Simonides, "whom it is hard to disbelieve," (σόφος γὰρ καὶ θεῖος ἀνηρ) on the one hand; than that of the Sophists on the other, as represented by Thrasymachus. "Show" us not only that Justice is a better thing than Injustice; but, by doing what (ἀλλὰ τί ποιοῦσα) to the soul of its possessor, each of them respectively, in and by

itself (αὐτη δι᾽αὐτην) even if men and gods alike mistake it for its contrary, is still the one a good thing, the other a bad one."

But note for a few moments the precise treatment of the idea of Justice in the first book of *The Republic.* Sophistry and common sense are trying their best to apprehend, to cover or occupy, a certain space, as the exact area of Justice. And what happens with each proposed definition in turn is, that it becomes, under conceivable circumstances, a definition of Injustice: not that, in practice, a confusion between the two is therefore likely; but that the *intellect* remains unsatisfied of the theoretic validity of the distinction.

Now that intellectual situation illustrates the sense in which sophistry is a reproduction of the Heraclitean flux. The old Heraclitean physical theory presents itself as a natural basis for the moral, the social, dissolution, which the sophistical movement promotes. But what a contrast to it, in the treatment of Justice, of the question, What Justice *is*? in that introductory book of *The Republic.* The first book forms in truth an eristic, a destructive or negative. Dialogue (such as we have other examples of) in which the whole business might have concluded, prematurely, with an exposure of the inadequacy, alike of common-sense as represented by Simonides, and of a sophisticated philosophy as represented by Thrasymachus, to define Justice. Note, however, in what way, precisely. That it is Just, for instance, to restore what one owes (τὸ τά ὀφειλόμενα αποδιδόναι) might pass well enough for a general guide to right conduct; and the sophistical judgment that Justice is "The interest of the stronger" is not more untrue than the contrary paradox that "Justice is a plot of the weak against the strong."

It is, then, in regard to the claims of Justice, not so much on practice, as on the intellect, in its demand for a clear theory of practice, that those definitions fail. They are failures because they fail to distinguish absolutely, ideally, as towards the intellect, what is, from what is not. To Plato, for whom, constitutionally, and *ex hypothesi*, what can be clearly thought is the precise measure of what really is, if such a thought about Justice—absolutely inclusive and exclusive—is, after all our efforts, not to be ascertained,

this can only be, because Justice is not a real thing, but only an empty or confused name.

Now the Sophist and the popular moralist, in that preliminary attempt to define the nature of Justice—what is right, are both alike trying, first in this formula, then in that, to occupy, by a thought, and by a definition which may convey that thought into the mind of another—to occupy, or cover, a certain area of the phenomena of experience, as the Just. And what happens thereupon is this, that by means of a certain kind of casuistry, by the allegation of certain possible cases of conduct, the whole of that supposed area of the Just is occupied by definitions of Injustice, from this centre or that. Justice therefore—its area, the space of experience which it covers, dissolves away, literally, as the eye is fixed upon it, like Heraclitean water: it is and is not. And if this, and the like of this, is to the last all that can be known or said of it, Justice will be no current coin, at least to the acute philosophic mind. But has some larger philosophy perhaps something more to say of it? and the power of defining an area, upon which no definition of Injustice, in any conceivable case of act or feeling, can infringe? That is the question upon which the essential argument of *The Republic* starts—upon a voyage of discovery. It is Plato's own figure.

There, clearly enough, may be seen what the difference, the difference of aim, between Socrates and the Sophists really was, amid much that they had in common, as being both alike distinguished from that older world of opinion of which Simonides is the mouthpiece.

The quarrel of Socrates with the Sophists was in part one of those antagonisms which are involved necessarily in the very conditions of an age that has not yet made up its mind; was in part also a mere rivalry of individuals; and it might have remained in memory only as a matter of historical interest. It has been otherwise. That innocent word "Sophist" has survived in common language, to indicate some constantly recurring viciousness, in the treatment of one's own and of other minds, which is always at variance with such habits of thought as are really worth while. There is an every-day "sophistry" of course, against which we

have all of us to be on our guard—that insincerity of reasoning on behalf of sincere convictions, true or false in themselves as the case may be, to which, if we are unwise enough to argue at all with each other, we must all be tempted at times. Such insincerity however is for the most part apt to expose itself. But there is a more insidious sophistry of which Plato is aware; and against which he contends in the *Protagoras*, and again still more effectively in the *Phaedrus*; the closing pages of which discover the essential point of that famous quarrel between the Sophists and Socrates or Plato, in regard to a matter which is of permanent interest in itself, and as being not directly connected with practical morals is unaffected by the peculiar prejudices of that age. Art, the art of oratory, in particular, and of literary composition—in this case, how one should write or speak really inflammatory discourses about love, write love-letters, so to speak, that shall really get at the heart they're meant for—that was a matter on which the Sophists had thought much professionally. And the debate introduced in the *Phaedrus* regarding the secret of success in proposals of love or friendship turns properly on this: whether it is necessary, or even advantageous, for one who would be a good orator, or writer, a poet, a good artist generally, to know, and consciously to keep himself in contact with, the truth of his subject as he *knows* or *feels* it; or only with what other people, perhaps quite indolently, *think*, or suppose others to think, about it. And here the charge of Socrates against those professional teachers of the art of rhetoric comes to be, that, with much superficial aptitude in the conduct of the matter, they neither reach, nor put others in the way of reaching, that intellectual ground of things (of the consciousness of love for instance, when they are to open their lips, and presumably their souls, about that) in true contact with which alone can there be a real mastery in dealing with them. That you yourself must have an inward, carefully ascertained, measured, instituted hold over anything you are to convey with any real power to others, is the truth which the Platonic Socrates, in strongly convinced words, always reasonable about it, formulates, in opposition to the Sophists' impudently avowed theory and practice of the *superficial*, as such. Well! we all always need to be set on

our guard against theories which natter the natural indolence of our minds.

"We proposed then just now," says Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, "to consider the theory of the way in which one would or would not write or speak well."—"Certainly!"—"Well then, must there not be in those who are to speak meritoriously, an understanding well acquainted with the truth of the things they are to speak about?"—"Nay!" answers Phaedrus, in that age of sophistry, "It is in this way I have heard about it—that it is not necessary for one who would be a master of rhetoric to learn what really is *just*, for instance; but rather what seems just to the multitude who are to give judgment: nor again what is good or beautiful; but only what seems so to them. For persuasion comes of the latter; by no means of a hold upon the truth of things."

Whether or not the Sophists were quite fairly chargeable with that sort of "inward lie," just this, at all events, was in the judgment of Plato the essence of sophistic vice. With them art began too precipitately, as mere form without matter; a thing of disconnected empiric rules, caught from the mere surface of other people's productions, in congruity with a general method which everywhere ruthlessly severed branch and flower from its natural root-art from one's own vivid sensation or belief. The Lacedaemonian (ὁ Λάκων) Plato's favourite scholar always, as having that infinite patience which is the note of a sincere, a really impassioned lover of anything, says, in his convinced Lacedaemonian way, that a genuine art of speech (τοῦ λέγειν ἔτοιμος τέχνη) unless one be in contact with truth, there neither is nor can be. We are reminded of that difference between genuine memory, and mere haphazard recollection, noted by Plato in the story he tells so well of the invention of writing in ancient Egypt. It might be doubted, he thinks, whether genuine memory was encouraged by that invention. The note on the margin by the inattentive reader to "remind himself," is, as we know, often his final good-bye to what it should remind him of. Now this is true of all art: Λόγων ἀρὰ τέχνην, ὁ τὴν ἀληθειαν μὴ εἰδώς, δασ τε τεθφρεύκος, γέλοιον τινα καὶ ἄτεχνον παρέξεται. It is but

a kind of bastard art of mere words (τέχνη ἀτεχνος) that he will have who does not know the *truth* of things, but has tried to hunt out what other people *think* about it. "Conception," observed an intensely personal, deeply stirred, poet and artist of our own generation: "Conception, fundamental brainwork—that is what makes the difference, in all art."

Against all pretended, mechanically communicable rules of art then, against any rule of literary composition, for instance, unsanctioned by the facts, by a clear apprehension of the facts, of that experience, which to each one of us severally is the beginning, if it be not also the end, of all knowledge, against every merely formal dictate (their name is legion with practising Sophists of all ages), Περὶ βραχυλογίας, και ἐλεεινολογίας, καὶ δεινώσεως, concerning freedom or precision, figure, emphasis, proportion of parts and the like, exordium and conclusion—against all such the Platonic Socrates still protests, "You know what must be known before harmony can be attained, but not yet the laws of harmony itself,"—τὰ πρὸ τραγωδίας, Sophocles would object in like case, τὰ πρὸ τραγωδίας, ἀλλ᾽ οὐ τραγικά. Given the dynamic Sophoclean intention or conviction, and the irresistible law of right utterance, (ἀνάγκη λογογραφική) how one *must* write or speak, will make itself felt; will assuredly also renew many an old precept, as to how one shall write or speak, learned at school. To speak πρὸς δόξαν only, as towards mere unreasoned opinion, might do well enough in the law-courts with people, who (as is understood in that case) do not really care very much about justice itself, desire only that a friend should be acquitted, or an enemy convicted, irrespectively of it; but it is not the principle on which Abelard and Heloise wrote their famous love-letters; or Plato his kindled and enkindling words on love and friendship in the *Symposium*, and in that very Dialogue of the *Phaedrus.* It is not the way in which, as Dante records, a certain book discoursed of love to Paolo and Francesca, till they found themselves—well! in the *Inferno*; so potent it was.

For the essence of all artistic beauty is expression, which cannot be where there's really nothing to be expressed; the line, the colour, the word, following obediently, and with minute scruple,

the conscious motions of a convinced intelligible soul. To make men interested in themselves, as being the very ground of all reality for them, *la vraie vérité*, as the French say—that was the essential function of the Socratic method: to flash light into the house within, its many chambers, its memories and associations, upon its inscribed and pictured walls. Fully occupied there, as with his own essential business in his own home, the young man would become, of course, proportionately less interested, less meanly interested, in what was superficial, in the mere outsides, of other people and their occupations. With the true artist indeed, with almost every expert, all knowledge, of almost every kind, tells, is attracted into, and duly charged with, the force of what may be his leading apprehension. And as the special function of all speech as a fine art is the control of minds (ψυχαγωγία) it is in general with knowledge of the soul of man—with a veritable psychology, with as much as possible as we can get of that—that the writer, the speaker, must be chiefly concerned, if he is to handle minds not by mere empiric routine, τριβῇ, μόνον, καὶ ἐμπειρίᾳ ἀλλὰ τέχνη, but by the power of veritable fine art. Now such art, such theory, is not "to be caught with the left hand," as the Greek phrase went; and again, χαλεπὰ τὰ καλά. We have no time to hear in English Plato's clever specimens of the way in which people would write about love without success. Let us rather hear himself on that subject, in his own characteristic mood of conviction.

"Try! she said (a certain Sibylline woman namely, from whose lips Socrates in the *Symposium* is supposed to quote what follows) Try to apply your mind as closely as possible to what I am going to say. For he who has been led thus far in the discipline of love, beholding beautiful objects in the right order, coming now towards the end of the doctrine of love, will on a sudden behold a beauty wonderful in its nature—that, Socrates! towards which indeed the former exercises were all designed; being first of all ever existent; having neither beginning nor end; neither growing or fading away; and then, not beautiful in one way, unbeautiful in another, beautiful now, but not then; beautiful in this relation, unlovely in that; to some, but not to others. Nor again will that

beauty appear to him to be beautiful as a face or hands or anything else that belongs to the body; nor as any kind of reasoning or science; nor as being resident in anything else, as in a living creature or the earth or the sky or any other thing; but as being itself by itself, ever in a single form with itself, all other beautiful things so participating in it, that while they begin and cease to be, that neither becomes more nor less nor suffers any other change. Whenever, then, anyone, beginning from things here below, through a right practice of love, ascending, begins to discern that other beauty, he will almost have reached the end. For this in truth is the right method of proceeding towards the doctrine of love, or of being conducted therein by another—beginning from these beautiful objects here below ever to be going up higher, with that other beauty in view; using them as steps of a ladder; mounting from the love of one fair person to the love of two, and from the love of two to the love of all; and from the love of beautiful persons to the love of beautiful employments—καλὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα (that means being a soldier, or a priest, or a scholar) and from the love of beautiful employments to the love of beautiful kinds of knowledge, till he passes from degrees of knowledge to that knowledge which is the knowledge of nothing else save the absolute Beauty itself, and knows it at length as in itself it really is. At this moment of life, dear Socrates! said the Mantinean Sibyl, if at any moment, man truly lives, beholding the absolute beauty—the which, so you have once seen it, will appear beyond the comparison of gold, or raiment, or those beautiful young persons, seeing whom now, like many another, you are so overcome that you are ready, beholding those beautiful persons and associating ever with them, if it were possible, neither to eat nor drink but only to look into their eyes and sit beside them. What then, she asked, suppose we? if it were given to any one to behold the absolute beauty, in its clearness, its pureness, its unmixed essence; not replete with flesh and blood and colours and other manifold vanity of this mortal life; but if he were able to behold that divine beauty (μονοειδὲς) simply as it is. Do you think, she said, that life would be a poor thing to one whose eyes were fixed on that, seeing that, (ᾧ δεῖ) with the organ through which it must be seen,

and communing with that? Do you not think rather, she asked, that here alone it will be his, seeing the beautiful with that through which it may be seen (namely with the imaginative reason, ὁ νοῦς) to beget no mere phantasms of virtue, as it is no phantom he apprehends, but the true virtue, as he embraces what is true? And having begotten virtue (virtue is the child that will be born of this mystic intellectual commerce, or *connubium of* the imaginative reason with ideal beauty) and reared it, he will become dear to God, and if any man may be immortal he will be." *Symposium*, 210.

The essential vice of sophistry, as Plato conceived it, was that for it no real things existed. Real things did exist for Plato, things that were "an end in themselves;" and the Platonic Socrates was right—Plato has written so well there, because he was no scholar of the Sophists as he understood them, but is writing of what he really knows.

Chapter Six

The Genius of Plato

All true criticism of philosophic doctrine, as of every other product of human mind, must begin with an historic estimate of the conditions, antecedent and contemporary, which helped to make it precisely what it was. But a complete criticism does not end there. In the evolution of abstract doctrine as we find it written in the history of philosophy, if there is always, on one side, the fatal, irresistible, mechanic play of circumstance—the circumstances of a particular age, which may be analysed and explained; there is always also, as if acting from the opposite side, the comparatively inexplicable force of a personality, resistant to, while it is moulded by, them. It might even be said that the trial-task of criticism, in regard to literature and art no less than to philosophy, begins exactly where the estimate of general conditions, of the conditions common to all the products of this or that particular age—of the "environment"—leaves off, and we touch what is unique in the individual genius which contrived after all, by force of will, to have its own masterful way with that environment. If in reading Plato, for instance, the philosophic student has to re-construct for himself, as far as possible, the general character of an *age*, he must also, so far as he may, reproduce the portrait of a *person.* The Sophists, the Sophistical world, around him; his master, Socrates; the Pre-Socratic philosophies; the mechanic influence, that is to say, of past and present—of course we can know nothing at all of the Platonic doctrine except so far as we see it in well-ascertained contact with all that; but there is also Plato himself in it.

—A personality, we may notice at the outset, of a certain complication. The great masters of philosophy have been for the most

part its noticeably single-minded servants. As if in emulation of Aristotle's simplicity of character, his absorbing intellectualism—impressive certainly, heroic enough, in its way—they have served science, science *in vacuo*, as if nothing beside, faith, imagination, love, the bodily sense, could detach them from it for an hour. It is not merely that we know little of their lives (there was so little to tell!) but that we know nothing at all of their *temperaments*; of which, that one leading abstract or scientific force in them was in fact strictly exclusive. Little more than intellectual abstractions themselves, in them philosophy was wholly faithful to its colours, or its colourlessness; rendering not grey only, as Hegel said of it, but all colours alike, in grey.

With Plato it was otherwise. In him, the passion for truth did but bend, or take the bent of, certain ineradicable predispositions of his nature, in themselves perhaps somewhat opposed to that. It is however in the blending of diverse elements in the mental constitution of Plato that the peculiar Platonic quality resides. Platonism is in one sense an emphatic witness to the unseen, the transcendental, the non-experienced, the beauty, for instance, which is not for the bodily eye. Yet the author of this philosophy of the unseen was—Who can doubt it who has read but a page of him? this, in fact, is what has led and kept to his pages many who have little or no turn for the sort of questions Plato actually discusses—The author of this philosophy of the unseen was one, for whom, as was said of a very different French writer, "the *visible* world really existed." Austere as he seems, and on well-considered principle really is, his temperance or austerity, aesthetically so winning, is attained only by the chastisement, the control, of a variously interested, a richly sensuous nature. Yes, the visible world, so pre-eminently worth eye-sight at Athens just then, really existed for him: exists still—there's the point!—is active still everywhere, when he seems to have turned away from it to invisible things.

To the somewhat sad-coloured school of Socrates, and its discipline towards apathy or contempt in such matters, he had brought capacities of bodily sense with the making in them of an *Odyssey*; or (shall we say?) of a poet after the order of Sappho or Catullus;

as indeed also a practical intelligence, a popular management of his own powers, a skill in philosophic yet mundane Greek prose, which might have constituted him the most successful of Sophists. You cannot help seeing that his mind is a storehouse of all the liveliest imageries of men and things. Nothing, if it really arrests eye or ear at all, is too trivial to note. Passing through the crowd of human beings, he notes the sounds alike of their solemn hymns and of their petteist handicraft. A conventional philosopher might speak of "dumb matter," for instance; but Plato has lingered too long in braziers' workshops to lapse into so stupid an epithet. And if the persistent hold of sensible things upon him thus reveals itself in trifles, it is manifest no less in the way in which he can tell a long story—no one more effectively! and again, in his graphic presentment of whole scenes from actual life, like that with which *The Republic* opens. His Socrates, like other people, is curious to witness a new religious function: how they will do it. As in modern times, it would be a pleasant occasion also for meeting the acquaintance one likes best—Ξυνεσόμεθα πολλοῖς τῶν νέων αὐτόθι. "We shall meet a number of our youth there: we shall have a dialogue: there will be a torchlight procession in honour of the goddess, an equestrian procession: a novel feature!—What? Torches in their hands, passed on as they race? Aye, and an illumination, through the entire night. It will be worth seeing!"—that old midnight hour, as Carlyle says of another vivid scene, "shining yet on us, ruddy-bright through the centuries." Put alongside of that, and, for life-like charm, side by side with Murillo's Beggar-boys (you catch them, if you look at his canvas on the sudden, actually moving their mouths, to laugh and speak and munch their crusts, all at once) the scene in the *Lysis* of the dice-players. There the boys are! in full dress, to take part in a religious ceremony. It is scarcely over; but they are already busy with the knuckle-bones, some just outside the door, others in a corner. Though Plato never tells one without due motive, yet he loves a story for its own sake, can make one of fact or fancy at a moment's notice, or re-tell other people's better: how those dear skinny grasshoppers of Attica, for instance, had once been human creatures, who, when the Muses first came on earth, were so

absorbed by their music that they forgot even to eat and drink, till they died of it. And then the story of Gyges in *The Republic*, and the ring that can make its wearer invisible—it goes as easily, as the ring itself round the finger.

Like all masters of literature, Plato has of course varied excellences; but perhaps none of them has won for him a larger number of friendly readers than this impress of visible reality. For him, truly (as he supposed the highest sort of knowledge must of necessity be) all knowledge was like knowing a *person.* The Dialogue itself, being, as it is, the special creation of his literary art, becomes in his hands, and by his masterly conduct of it, like a single living person; so comprehensive a sense does he bring to bear upon it of the slowly-developing physiognomy of the thing—its organic structure, its symmetry and expression—combining all the various, disparate subjects of *The Republic*, for example, into a manageable whole, so entirely that, looking back, one fancies this long dialogue of at least three hundred pages might have occupied, perhaps an afternoon.

And those who take part in it! If Plato did not create the "Socrates" of his Dialogues, he has created other characters hardly less lifelike. The young Charmides, the incarnation of natural, as the aged Cephalus of acquired, temperance; his Sophoclean amenity as he sits there pontifically at the altar, in the court of his peaceful house; the large company, of varied character and of every age, which moves in those Dialogues, though still oftenest the young in all their youthful liveliness—who that knows them at all can doubt Plato's hold on persons, that of persons on him? Sometimes, even when they are not formally introduced into his work, characters that had interested, impressed, or touched him, inform and colour it, as if with their personal influence, showing through what purports to be the wholly abstract analysis of some wholly abstract moral situation. Thus, the form of the dying Socrates himself is visible pathetically in the description of the suffering righteous man, actually put into his own mouth in the second book of *The Republic*; as the winning brilliancy of the lost spirit of Alcibiades infuses those pages of the sixth, which discuss the nature of one by birth and endowments an aristocrat,

amid the dangers to which it is exposed in the Athens of that day—the qualities which must make him, if not the saviour, the destroyer, of a society which cannot remain unaffected by his showy presence. *Corruptio optimi pessima*! Yet even here, when Plato is dealing with the inmost elements of personality, his eye is still on its object, on *character* as seen in *characteristics*, through those details, which make character a sensible fact, the changes of colour in the face as of tone in the voice, the gestures, the really physiognomic value, or the mere tricks, of gesture and glance and speech. What is visibly expressive in, or upon, persons; those flashes of temper which check yet give renewed interest to the course of a conversation; the delicate touches of intercourse, which convey to the very senses all the subtleties of the heart or of the intelligence—it is always more than worth his while to make note of these.

We see, for instance, the sharp little pygmy bit of a soul that catches sight of any little thing so keenly, and makes a very proper lawyer. We see, as well as hear, the "rhapsodist," whose sensitive performance of his part is nothing less than an "interpretation" of it, artist and critic at once: the personal vanities of the various speakers in his Dialogues, as though Plato had observed, or overheard them, alone; and the inevitable prominence of youth wherever it is present at all, nothwithstanding the real sweetness of manner and modesty of soul he records of it so affectionately. It is this he loves best to linger by; to feel himself in contact with a condition of life, which translates all it is, so immediately, into delightful colour, and movement, and sound. The eighth and ninth books of *The Republic* are a grave contribution, as you know, to abstract moral and political theory, a generalisation of weighty changes of character in men and states. But his observations on the concrete traits of individuals, young or old, which enliven us on the way; the difference in sameness of sons and fathers, for instance; the influence of servants on their masters; how the minute ambiguities of rank, as a family becomes impoverished, tell on manners, on temper; all the play of moral colour in the reflex of mere circumstance on what men really are—the characterisation of all this has with Plato a touch of the peculiar fineness of

Thackeray, one might say. Plato enjoys it for its own sake, and would have been an excellent writer of fiction.

There is plenty of humour in him also of course, and something of irony—salt, to keep the exceeding richness and sweetness of his discourse from cloying the palate. The affectations of sophists, or professors, their staginess or their inelegance, the harsh laugh, the swaggering ways, of Thrasymachus, whose determination to make the general company share in a private conversation, is significant of his whole character, he notes with a finely-pointed pencil, with something of the fineness of malice—*malin*, as the French say. Once Thrasymachus had been actually seen to blush. It is with a very different sort of fineness Plato notes the blushes of the young; of Hippocrates, for instance, in the *Protagoras*. The great Sophist was said to be in Athens, at the house of Callicles, and the diligent young scholar is up betimes, eager to hear him. He rouses Socrates before daylight. As they linger in the court, the lad speaks of his own intellectual aspirations; blushes at his confidence. It was just then that the morning sun blushed with his first beam, as if to reveal the lad's blushing face—Καὶ ὃς εἶπεν ἐρυθριάσας, ἤδη γὰρ ὑπεφαινέ τι ἡμέρας ὥστε καταφανῆ αὐτὸν γενέσθαι. He who noted that so precisely had, surely, the delicacy of the artist, a fastidious eye for the subtleties of colour as soul made visibly expressive. "Poor creature as I am," says the Platonic Socrates, in the *Lysis*, concerning another youthful blush, "Poor creature as I am, I have one talent: I can recognise, at first sight, the lover and the beloved."

So it is with the audible world also. The exquisite monotony of the voice of the great sophist, for example, "once set in motion, goes ringing on like a brazen pot, which if you strike it continues to sound till some one lays his hand upon it." And if the delicacy of eye and ear, so also the keenness and constancy of his observation, are manifest in those elaborately wrought images for which the careful reader lies in wait: the mutiny of the sailors in the ship—ship of the state, or of one's own soul: the echoes and beams and shadows of that half-illuminated cavern, the human mind: the caged birds in the *Theaetetus*, which are like the flighty, half-contained notions of an imperfectly educated understanding. *Real*

notions are to be ingrained by persistent thoroughness of the "dialectic" method, as if by conscientious dyers. He makes us stay to watch such dyers busy with their purple stuff, as he had done; adding as it were ethic colour to what he sees with the eye, and painting while he goes, as if on the margin of his high philosophical discourse, himself scarcely aware; as the monkish scribe set bird or flower, with so much truth of earth, in the blank spaces of his heavenly meditation.

Now Plato is one for whom the visible world thus "really exists" because he is by nature and before all things, from first to last, unalterably a lover. In that, precisely, lies the secret of the susceptible and diligent eye, the so sensitive ear. The central interest of his own youth—of his profoundly impressible youth—as happens always with natures of real capacity, gives law and pattern to all that succeeds it. Τὰ ἐρωτικά, as he says, the experience, the discipline, of love, had been that for Plato; and, as love must of necessity deal above all with visible persons, this discipline involved an exquisite culture of the senses. It is "as lovers use," that he is ever on the watch for those dainty messages, those finer intimations, to eye and ear. If in the later development of his philosophy the highest sort of knowledge comes to seem like the knowledge of a person, the relation of the reason to truth like the commerce of one person with another, the peculiarities of personal relationship thus moulding his conception of the properly invisible world of ideas, this is partly because, for a lover, the entire visible world, its hues and outline, its attractiveness, its power and bloom, must have associated themselves pre-eminently with the power and bloom of visible living persons. With these, as they made themselves known by word and glance and touch, through the medium of the senses, lay the forces, which, in that inexplicable tyranny of one person over another, shaped the soul.

Just there, then, is the secret of Plato's intimate concern with, his power over, the sensible world, the apprehensions of the sensuous faculty: he is a lover, a great lover, somewhat after the manner of Dante. For him, as for Dante, in the impassioned glow of his conceptions, the material and the spiritual are blent and fused together. While, in that fire and heat, what is spiritual attains the

definite visibility of a crystal, what is material, on the other hand, will lose its earthiness and impurity. It is of the amorous temper, therefore, you must think in connexion with Plato's youth—of this, amid all the strength of the genius in which it is so large a constituent-indulging, developing, refining, the sensuous capacities, the powers of eye and ear, of the fancy also which can refashion, of the speech which can best respond to and reproduce, their liveliest presentments. That is why when Plato speaks of visible things it is as if you saw them. He who in the *Symposium* describes so vividly the pathway, the ladder, of love, its joyful ascent towards a more perfect beauty than we have ever yet actually seen, by way of a parallel to the gradual elevation of mind towards perfect knowledge, knew all that, we may be sure—τὰ ἐρωτικὰ—all the ways of lovers, in the literal sense. He speaks of them retrospectively indeed, but knows well what he is talking about. Plato himself had not been always a mere Platonic lover; was rather, naturally, as he makes Socrates say of himself, ἥττων τῶν καλῶν—subject to the influence of fair persons. A certain penitential colour amid that glow of fancy and expression, hints that the final harmony of his nature had been but gradually beaten out, and invests the temperance, actually so conspicuous in his own nature, with the charms of a patiently elaborated effect of art.

For we must remind ourselves just here, that, quite naturally also, instinctively, and apart from the austere influences which claimed and kept his allegiance later, Plato, with a kind of unimpassioned passion, was a lover in particular of temperance; of temperance too, as it may be *seen*, as a visible thing—seen in Charmides, say! in that subdued and grey-eyed loveliness, "clad in sober grey;" or in those youthful athletes which, in ancient marble, reproduce him and the like of him with sound, firm outlines, such as temperance secures. Still, that some more luxurious sense of physical beauty had at one time greatly disturbed him, divided him against himself, we may judge from his own words in a famous passage of the *Phaedrus* concerning the management, the so difficult management, of those winged steeds of the body which is the chariot of the soul.

Puzzled, in some degree, Plato seems to remain, not merely in regard to the higher love and the lower, Aphrodite Urania and Aphrodite Pandemus, as he distinguishes them in the *Symposium*; nor merely with the difficulty of arbitrating between some inward beauty, and that which is outward; with the odd mixture everywhere, save in its still unapprehended but eternal essence, of the beautiful with what is otherwise; but he is yet more harassed by the experience (it is in this shape that the world-old puzzle of the existence of evil comes to him) that even to the truest eyesight, to the best trained faculty of soul, the beautiful would never come to seem strictly concentric with the good. That seems to have taxed his understanding as gravely as it had tried his will, and he was glad when in the mere natural course of years he was become at all events less ardent a lover. 'Tis he is the authority for what Sophocles had said on the happy decay of the passions as age advanced: it was "like being set free from service to a band of madmen." His own distinguishing note is tranquil afterthought upon this conflict, with a kind of envy of the almost disembodied old age of Cephalus, who quotes that saying of Sophocles amid his placid sacrificial doings. Connect with this quiet scene, and contrast with the luxuriant power of the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, what, for a certain touch of later mysticism in it, we might call Plato's evening prayer, in the ninth book of *The Republic*—

"When any one, being healthfully and temperately disposed towards himself, turns to sleep, having stirred the reasonable part of him with a feast of fair thoughts and high problems, being come to full consciousness, himself with himself, and has, on the other hand, committed the element of desire neither to appetite, nor to surfeiting, to the end that this may slumber well, and, by its pain or pleasure, cause no trouble to that part which is best in him, but may suffer it, alone by itself, in its pure essence, to behold and aspire towards some object, and apprehend what it knows not—some event, of the past, it may be, or something that now is, or will be hereafter; and in like manner has soothed hostile impulse, so that, falling to no angry thoughts against any, he goes not to rest with a troubled spirit, but with those two parts at peace within,

and with that third part, wherein reason is engendered, on the move—you know, I think, that in sleep of this sort he lays special hold on truth, and then least of all is there lawlessness in the visions of his dreams." *Republic*, 571.

For Plato, being then about twenty-eight years old, had listened to the "Apology" of Socrates; had heard from them all that others had heard or seen of his last hours; himself perhaps actually witnessed those last hours. "Justice itself"—the "absolute" Justice—had then become almost a visible object, and had greatly solemnised him. The rich young man, rich also in intellectual gifts, who might have become (we see this in the adroit management of his written work) the most brilliant and effective of Sophists; who might have developed dialogues into plays, tragedy, perhaps comedy, as he cared; whose sensuous or graphic capacity might have made him the poet of an *Odyssey*, a Sappho, or a Catullus, or, say! just such a poet as, just because he was so attractive, would have been disfranchised in the Perfect City; was become the creature of an immense seriousness, of a fully adult sense, unusual in Greek perhaps even more than in Roman writers, "of the weightiness of the matters concerning which he has to discourse, and of the frailty of man." He inherits, alien as they might be to certain powerful influences in his own temper, alike the sympathies and the antipathies of that strange, delightful teacher, who had given him (most precious of gifts!) an inexhaustible interest in himself. It is in this way he inherits a preference for those trying severities of thought which are characteristic of the Eleatic school; an antagonism to the successful Sophists of the day, in whom the old sceptical "philosophy of motion" seemed to be renewed as a theory of morals; and henceforth, in short, this master of visible things, this so ardent lover, will be a lover of the invisible, with—Yes! there it is constantly, in the Platonic dialogues, not to be explained away—with a certain asceticism, amid all the varied opulence, of sense, of speech and fancy, natural to Plato's genius.

The lover, who is become a lover of the invisible, but still a lover, and therefore, literally, a seer, of it, carrying an elaborate cultivation of the bodily senses, of eye and ear, their natural force

and acquired fineness—gifts akin properly to τὰ ἐρωτικὰ, as he says, to the discipline of sensuous love—into the world of intellectual abstractions; seeing and hearing there too, associating for ever all the imagery of things seen with the conditions of what primarily exists only for the mind, filling that "hollow land" with delightful colour and form, as if now at last the mind were veritably dealing with living people there, living people who play upon us through the affinities, the repulsion and attraction, of *persons* towards one another, all the magnetism, as we call it, of actual human friendship or love—There, is the *formula* of Plato's genius, the essential condition of the specially Platonic temper, of Platonism. And his style, because it really is Plato's style, conforms to, and in its turn promotes in others, that mental situation. He breaks as it were visible colour into the very texture of his work: his vocabulary, the very stuff he manipulates, has its delightful aesthetic qualities; almost every word, one might say, its figurative value. And yet no one perhaps has with equal power literally sounded the unseen depths of thought, and, with what may be truly called "substantial" word and phrase, given locality there to the mere adumbrations, the dim hints and surmise, of the speculative mind. For him, all gifts of sense and intelligence converge in one supreme faculty of theoretic vision, θεωρία, the imaginative reason.

To trace that thread of physical colour, entwined throughout, and multiplied sometimes into large tapestried figures, is the business, the enjoyment, of the student of the Dialogues, as he reads them. For this or that special literary quality indeed we may go safely by preference to this or that particular Dialogue; to the *Gorgias*, for instance, for the readiest Attic wit, and a manly practical sense in the handling of philosophy; to the *Charmides* for something like the effect of sculpture in modelling a person; to the *Timaeus*, for certain brilliant chromatic effects. Yet who that reads the *Theaetetus*, or the *Phaedrus*, or the seventh book of *The Republic*, can doubt Plato's gift in precisely the opposite direction; that gift of sounding by words the depths of thought, a plastic power literally, moulding to term and phrase what might have seemed in its very nature too impalpable and abstruse to lend

itself, in any case, to language? He gives names to the invisible acts, processes, creations, of abstract mind, as masterly, as efficiently, as Adam himself to the visible living creations of old. As Plato speaks of them, we might say, those abstractions too become visible living creatures. We read the speculative poetry of Wordsworth, or Tennyson; and we may observe that a great metaphysical force has come into language which is by no means purely technical or scholastic; what a help such language is to the understanding, to a real hold over the things, the thoughts, the mental processes, those words denote; a vocabulary to which thought freely commits itself, trained, stimulated, raised, thereby, towards a high level of abstract conception, surely to the increase of our general intellectual powers. That, of course, is largely due to Plato's successor, to Aristotle's life-long labour of analysis and definition, and to his successors the Schoolmen, with their systematic culture of a precise instrument for the registration, by the analytic intellect, of its own subtlest movements. But then, Aristotle, himself the first of the Schoolmen, had succeeded Plato, and did but formulate, as a terminology "of art," as technical language, what for Plato is still vernacular, original, personal, the product in him of an instinctive imaginative power—a sort of *visual* power, but causing others also to see what is matter of original intuition for him.

From first to last our faculty of thinking is limited by our command of speech. Now it is straight from Plato's lips, as if in natural conversation, that the language came, in which the mind has ever since been discoursing with itself concerning itself, in that inward dialogue, which is the "active principle" of the dialectic method as an instrument for the attainment of truth. For, the essential, or dynamic, dialogue, is ever that dialogue of the mind with itself, which any converse with Socrates or Plato does but promote. The very words of Plato, then, challenge us straightway to larger and finer apprehension of the processess of our own minds; are themselves a discovery in the sphere of mind. It was he made us freemen of those solitary places, so trying yet so attractive: so remote and high, they seem, yet are naturally so close to us: he peopled them with intelligible forms. Nay more! By his

peculiar gift of verbal articulation he divined the mere hollow spaces which a knowledge, then merely potential, and an experience still to come, would one day occupy. And so, those who cannot admit his actual speculative results, precisely *his* report on the invisible theoretic world, have been to the point sometimes, in their objection, that by sheer effectiveness of abstract language, he gave an illusive air of reality or substance to the mere nonentities of metaphysic hypothesis—of a mind trying to feed itself on its own emptiness.

Just there—in the situation of one, shaped, by combining nature and circumstance, into a seer who has a sort of sensuous love of the unseen—is the paradox of Plato's genius, and therefore, always, of Platonism, of the Platonic temper. His aptitude for things visible, with the gift of words, empowers him to express, as if for the eyes, what except to the eye of the mind is strictly invisible, what an acquired asceticism induces him to rank above, and sometimes, in terms of harshest dualism, oppose to, the sensible world. Plato is to be interpreted not merely by his antecedents, by the influence upon him of those who preceded him, but by his successors, by the temper, the intellectual alliances, of those who directly or indirectly have been sympathetic with him. Now it is noticeable that, at first sight somewhat incongruously, a certain number of Manicheans have always been of his company; people who held that matter was evil. Pointing significantly to an unmistakable vein of Manichean, or (Puritan sentiment actually there in the Platonic Dialogues, these rude companions or successors of his, carry us back to his great predecessor, to Socrates, whose personal influence had so strongly enforced on Plato the severities, moral and intellectual, alike of Parmenides and of the Pythagoreans. The cold breath of a harshly abstract, a too incorporeal philosophy, had blown, like an east wind, on that last depressing day in the prison-cell of Socrates; and the venerable commonplaces then put forth, in which an overstrained pagan sensuality seems to be reacting, to be taking vengeance, on itself, turned now sick and suicidal, will lose none of their weight with Plato—That "all who rightly touch philosophy, study nothing else than to *die*, and to be *dead*,"—that "the soul reasons best, when, as much as pos-

sible, it comes to be alone with itself, bidding good-bye to the body, and, to the utmost of its power, rejecting communion with it, with the very touch of it, aiming at what *is*." It was, in short, as if for the soul to have come into a human body at all, had been the seed of disease in it, the beginning of its own proper death.

As for any adornments or provision for this body, the master had declared that a true philosopher as such would make as little of them as possible. To those young hearers, the words of Socrates may well have seemed to anticipate, not the visible world he had then delineated in glowing colour as if for the bodily eye, but only the chilling influence of the hemlock; and it was because Plato was only half convinced of the Manichean or Puritan element in his master's doctrine, or rather was in contact with it on one side only of his complex and genial nature, that Platonism became possible, as a temper for which, in strictness, the opposition of matter to spirit has no ultimate or real existence. Not to be "pure" from the body, but to identify it, in its utmost fairness, with the fair soul, by a gymnastic "fused in music," became, from first to last, the aim of education as he conceived it. That the body is but "a hindrance to the attainment of philosophy, if one takes it along with one as a companion in one's search" (a notion which Christianity, at least in its later though wholly legitimate developments, will correct) can hardly have been the last thought of Plato himself on quitting it. He opens his door indeed to those austere monitors. They correct the sensuous richness of his genius, but could not suppress it. The sensuous lover becomes a lover of the invisible, but still a lover, after his earlier pattern, carrying into the world of intellectual vision, of θεωρία, all the associations of the actual world of sight. Some of its invisible realities he can all but see with the bodily eye: the absolute Temperance, in the person of the youthful Charmides; the absolute Righteousness, in the person of the dying Socrates. Yes,truly! all true knowledge will be like the knowledge of a person, of living persons, and truth, for Plato, in spite of his Socratic asceticism, to the last, something to *look* at. The eyes which had noted physical things, so finely, vividly, continuously, would be still at work; and, Plato thus qualifying the Manichean or Puritan element in Socrates by

his own capacity for the world of sense, Platonism has contributed largely, has been an immense encouragement towards, the redemption of matter, of the world of sense, by art, by all right education, by the creeds and worship of the Christian Church—towards the vindication of the dignity of the body.

It was doubtless because Plato was an excellent scholar that he did not begin to teach others till he was more than forty years old—one of the great scholars of the world, with Virgil and Milton: by which is implied that, possessed of the inborn genius, of those natural powers, which sometimes bring with them a certain defiance of rule, of the intellectual habits of others, he acquires, by way of habit and rule, all that can be taught and learned; and what is thus derived from others by docility and discipline, what is *rangé*, comes to have in him, and in his work, an equivalent weight with what is unique, impulsive, underivable. Raphael—Raphael, as you see him in the Blenheim *Madonna*, is a supreme example of such scholarship in the sphere of art. Born of a romantically ancient family, understood to be the descendant of Solon himself, Plato had been in early youth a writer of verse. That he turned to a more vigorous, though pedestrian mode of writing, was perhaps an effect of his corrective intercourse with Socrates, through some of the most important years of his life—from twenty to twenty-eight.

He belonged to what was just then the discontented class, and might well have taken refuge from active political life in political ideals, or in a kind of self-imposed exile. A traveller, adventurous for that age, he certainly became. After the *Lehrjahre*, the *Wanderjahre*!—all round the Mediterranean coasts as far west as Sicily. Think of what all that must have meant just then, for eyes which could see. If those journeys had begun in angry flight from home, it was for purposes of self-improvement they were continued: the delightful fruit of them is evident in what he writes; and finding him in friendly intercourse with Dionysius the elder, with Dio, and Dionysius the younger, at the polished court of Syracuse, we may understand that they were a search also for "the philosophic king," perhaps for the opportune moment of realising "the ideal state." In that case, his quarrels with those capricious

tyrants show that he was disappointed. For the future he sought no more to pass beyond the charmed theoretical circle, "speaking wisdom," as was said of Pythagoras, only "among the perfect." He returns finally to Athens; and there, in the quiet precincts of the *Academus*, which has left a somewhat dubious name to places where people come to be taught or to teach, founds, not a state, nor even a brotherhood, but only the first college, with something of a common life, of communism on that small scale, with Aristotle for one of its scholars, with its chapel, its gardens, its library with the authentic text of his *Dialogues* upon the shelves: we may just discern the sort of place through the scantiest notices. His reign was after all to be in his writings. Plato himself does nothing in them to retard the effacement which mere time brings to persons and their abodes; and there had been that, moreover, in his own temper, which promotes self-effacement. Yet as he left it, the place remained for centuries, according to his will, to its original use. What he taught through the remaining forty years of his life, the method of that teaching, whether it was less or more esoteric than the teaching of the extant *Dialogues*, is but matter of surmise. Writers, who in their day might still have said much we should have liked to hear, give us little but old, quasi-supernatural stories, told as if they had been new ones, about him. The year of his birth fell, according to some, in the very year of the death of Pericles (a significant date!) but is not precisely ascertainable: nor is the year of his death, nor its manner. *Scribens est mortuus*, says Cicero—after the manner of a true scholar, "he died pen in hand."

Chapter Seven

The Doctrine of Plato

I. *The Theory of Ideas*

Platonism is not a formal theory or body of theories, but a tendency, a group of tendencies—a tendency to think or feel, and to speak, about certain things in a particular way, discernible in Plato's dialogues as reflecting the peculiarities, the marked peculiarities, of himself and his own mental complexion. Those tendencies combine and find their complete expression in what Plato's commentators, rather than Plato, have called the "theory of ideas," itself indeed not so much a doctrine or theory, as a way of regarding and speaking of general terms, such as *Useful* or *Just*; of abstract notions, like *Equality*; of ideals, such as *Beauty*, or *The Perfect City*; of all those terms or notions, in short, which represent under general forms the particular presentations of our individual experience; or, to use Plato's own frequent expression, borrowed from his old Eleatic teachers, which reduce "the Many to the One."

What the nature of such representative terms and notions, genus and species, class-word, and abstract idea or ideal, may be; what their relationship to the individual, the unit, the particulars which they include; is, as we know, one of the constant problems of logic. Realism, which supposes the abstraction. *Animal* for instance, or *The Just*, to be not a mere name, *nomen*, as with the nominalists, nor a mere subjective thought as with the conceptualists, but to be *res*, a thing in itself, independent of the particular instances which come into and pass out of it, as also of the particular mind which entertains it—that is one of the fixed and formal answers to this question; and Plato is the father of all realists.

Realism, as such, in the sense just indicated, is not in itself a very difficult or transcendental theory; but rises, again and again, at least in a particular class of minds, quite naturally, as the answer to a natural question. Taking our own stand as to this matter somewhere between the realist and the conceptualist—See! we might say, there is a general consciousness, a permanent common sense, independent indeed of each one of us, but with which we are, each one of us, in communication. It is in that, those common or general ideas really reside. And we might add just here (giving his due to the nominalist also) that those abstract or common notions come to the individual mind through language, through common or general names, *Animal*, *Justice*, *Equality*, into which one's individual experience, little by little, drop by drop, conveys their full meaning or content; and, by the instrumentality of such terms and notions, thus locating the particular in the general, mediating between general and particular, between our individual experience and the common experience of our kind, we come to understand each other, and to assist each other's thoughts, as in a common mental atmosphere, an "intellectual world," as Plato calls it, a true νοητὸς τόπος. So much for the modern view; for what common sense might now suggest as to the nature of logical "universals."

Plato's realism however—what is called "The Theory of Ideas"—his way of regarding abstract term and general notion, what Plato has to say about "the Many and the One," is often very difficult; though of various degrees of difficulty, it must be observed, to various minds. From the simple and easily intelligible sort of realism attributed by Aristotle to Socrates, seeking in "universal definitions," or ideas, only a serviceable instrument for the distinguishing of what is essential from what is unessential in the actual things about him, Plato passes by successive stages, which we should try to keep distinct as we read him, to what may be rightly called a "transcendental," what to many minds has seemed a fantastic and unintelligible habit of thought, regarding those abstractions, which indeed seem to become for him not merely substantial things-in-themselves, but little short of living persons,

to be known as persons are made known to each other, by a system of affinities, on the old Eleatic rule, ὅμοιον ὁμοίῳ, like to like—these persons constituting together that common, eternal, intellectual world, a sort of divine family or hierarchy, with which the mind of the individual, so far as it is reasonable, or really knows, is in communion or correspondence. And here certainly is a theory, a tendency to think or feel, and to speak, about which the difficulties are many.

Yet as happens always with the metaphysical questions, or answers, which from age to age preoccupy acuter minds, those difficulties about the Many and the One actually had their attractiveness for some in the days of Plato—

"Our doctrine (says the Platonic Socrates in the *Philebus*) is, that one and the same thing (the one common notion, namely, embodied in one general term) which—ὑπο λόγων—under the influence of our thoughts and words, of thought and language, become one and many, circulates everywhere, in regard to everything of which existence is asserted from time to time. This law neither will cease to be, nor has it just now begun; but something of the kind is, I think, an eternal and ineradicable affection of our reason itself in us. And whenever a young man gets his first taste of this he is delighted as having found the priceless pearl of philosophy, he becomes an enthusiast in his delight; and eagerly sets in motion—κινεῖ—every definition—λόγος—every conception or mental definition (it looked so fixed and firm till then!) at one time winding things round each other and welding them into one (that is, he drops all particularities out of view, and thinks only of the one common form) and then again unwinding them, and dividing them into parts (he becomes intent now upon the particularities of the particular, till the one common term seems inapplicable) puzzling first, and most of all, himself; and then any one who comes nigh him, older or younger, or of whatever age he may be; sparing neither father nor mother, nor any one else who will listen; scarcely even the dumb creatures, to say nothing of

men; for he would hardly spare a barbarian, could he but find an interpreter." *Philebus*, 15.

The Platonic doctrine of "the Many and the One"—the problem with which we are brought face to face in this choice specimen of the humour as well as of the metaphysical power of Plato—is not precisely the question with which the speculative young man of our own day is likely to puzzle himself, or exercise the patience of his neighbour in a railway carriage, of his dog, or even of a Chinese; though the questions we are apt to tear to pieces, organism and environment, or protoplasm perhaps, or evolution, or the *Zeitgeist* and its doings, may, in their turn, come to seem quite as lifeless and unendurable. As the theological heresy of one age sometimes becomes the mere commonplace of the next, so, in matters of philosophic enquiry, it might appear that the all-absorbing novelty of one generation becomes nothing less than the standard of what is uninteresting, as such, to its successor. Still in the discussion even of abstract truths it is not so much what he thinks as the person who is thinking, that after all really tells. Plato and Platonism we shall never understand unless we are patient with him in what he has to tell us about "the Many and the One."

Plato's peculiar view of the matter, then, passes with him into a phase of poetic thought; as indeed all that Plato's genius touched came in contact with poetry. Of course we are not naturally formed to love, or be interested in, or attracted towards, the abstract as such; to notions, we might think, carefully deprived of all the incident, the colour and variety, which fits things—this or that—to the constitution and natural habit of our minds, fits them for attachment to what we really are. We cannot love or live upon *genus* and *species*, accident or substance, but for our minds, as for our bodies, need an orchard or a garden, with fruit and roses. Take a seed from the garden. What interest it has for us all lies in our sense of potential differentiation to come: the leaves, leaf upon leaf, the flowers, a thousand new seeds in turn. It is so with animal seed; and with humanity, individually, or as a whole, its expansion into a detailed, ever-changing, parti-coloured history of

particular facts and persons. Abstraction, the introduction of general ideas, seems to close it up again; to reduce flower and fruit, odour and savour, back again into the dry and worthless seed. We might as well be colour-blind at once, and there is not a proper name left! We may contrast generally the mental world we actually live in, where classification, the reduction of all things to common types, has come so far, and where the particular, to a great extent, is known only as the member of a class, with that other world, on the other side of the generalising movement to which Plato and his master so largely contributed—a world we might describe as being under Homeric conditions, such as we picture to ourselves with regret, for which experience was intuition, and life a continuous surprise, and every object unique, where all knowledge was still of the concrete and the particular, face to face delightfully.

To that gaudy tangle of what gardens, after all, are meant to produce, in the decay of time, as we may think at first sight, the systematic, logical gardener put his meddlesome hand, and straightway all ran to seed; to *genus* and *species* and *differentia,* into formal classes, under general notions, and with—yes! with written labels fluttering on the stalks, instead of blossoms—a botanic or "physic" garden, as they used to say, instead of our flower-garden and orchard. And yet (it must be confessed on the other hand) what we actually see, see and hear, is more interesting than ever; the nineteenth century as compared with the first, with Plato's days or Homer's; the faces, the persons behind those masks which yet express so much, the flowers, or whatever it may happen to be they carry or touch. The concrete, and that even as a visible thing, has gained immeasurably in richness and compass, in fineness, and interest, towards us, by the process, of which those acts of generalisation, of reduction to class and generic type, have certainly been a part. And holding still to the concrete, the particular, to the visible or sensuous, if you will, last as first, thinking of that as essentially the one vital and lively thing, really worth our while in a short life, we may recognise sincerely what generalisation and abstraction have done or may do, are defensible as doing, just for that—for the particular gem or

flower—what its proper service is to a mind in search, precisely, of a concrete and intuitive knowledge such as that.

Think, for a moment, of the difference, as regards mental attitude, between the naturalist who deals with things through ideas, and the layman (so to call him) in picking up a shell on the sea-shore; what it is that the subsumption of the individual into the species, its subsequent alliance to and co-ordination with other species, really does for the furnishing of the mind of the former. The layman, though we need not suppose him inattentive, or unapt to retain impressions, is in fact still but a child; and the shell, its colours and convolution, no more than a dainty, very easily destructible toy to him. Let him become a schoolboy about it, so to speak. The toy he puts aside; his mind is drilled perforce, to learn *about* it; and thereby is exercised, he may think, with everything except just the thing itself, as he cares for it; with other shells, with some general laws of life, and for a while it might seem that, turning away his eyes from the "vanity" of the particular, he has been made to sacrifice the concrete, the real and living product of nature, to a mere dry and abstract product of the mind. But when he comes out of school, and on the sea-shore again finds a fellow to his toy, perhaps a finer specimen of it, he may see what the service of that converse with the general has really been towards the concrete, towards what he sees—in regard to the particular thing he actually sees. By its juxtaposition and co-ordination with what is ever more and more not *it*, by the contrast of its very imperfection, at this point or that, with its own proper and perfect type, this concrete and particular thing has, in fact, been enriched by the whole colour and expression of the whole circumjacent world, concentrated upon, or as it were at focus in, it. By a kind of short-hand now, and as if in a single moment of vision, all that, which only a long experience, moving patiently from part to part, could exhaust, its manifold alliance with the entire world of nature, is legible upon it, as it lies there in one's hand.

So it is with the shell, the gem, with a glance of the eye; so it may be with the moral act, with a condition of the mind, or a feeling. You may draw, by use of this coinage (it is Hobbes's figure) this coinage of representative words and thoughts, at your

pleasure, upon the accumulative capital of the whole experience of humanity. Generalisation, whatever Platonists, or Plato himself at mistaken moments, may have to say about it, is a method, not of obliterating the concrete phenomenon, but of enriching it, with the joint perspective, the significance, the expressiveness, of all other things beside. What broad-cast light he enjoys!—that scholar, confronted with the sea-shell, for instance, or with some enigma of heredity in himself or another, with some condition of a particular soul, in circumstances which may never precisely so occur again; in the contemplation of that single phenomenon, or object, or situation. He not only sees, but understands (thereby only seeing the more) and will, therefore, also remember. The significance of the particular object he will retain, by use of his intellectual apparatus of notion and general law, as, to use Plato's own figure, fluid matter may be retained in vessels, not indeed of unbaked clay, but of alabaster or bronze. So much by way of apology for general ideas—abstruse, or intangible, or dry and seedy and wooden, as we may sometimes think them.

"Two things," says Aristotle, "might rightly be attributed to Socrates: inductive reasoning, and universal definitions." Now when Aristotle says this of Socrates, he is recording the institution of a method, which might be applied in the way just indicated, to natural objects, to such a substance as carbon, or to such natural processes as heat or motion; but which, by Socrates himself, as by Plato after him, was applied almost exclusively to moral phenomena, to the generalisation of aesthetic, political, ethical ideas, of the laws of operation (for the essence of every true conception, or definition, or idea, is a law of operation) of the feelings and the will. To get a notion, a definition, or idea, of motion, for example, which shall not exclude the subtler forms of it, heat for instance—to get a notion of carbon, which shall include not common charcoal only, but the diamond, a thing superficially so unlike it, and which shall also exclude, perhaps, some other substance, superficially almost indistinguishable from it: such is the business of physical science, in obedience to rules, outlined by Bacon in the first book of the *Novum Organum*, for securing those acts of "inclusion" and "exclusion," *inclusiones*, *exclusiones*,

naturae, *debitae*, as he says, "which the nature of things requires," if our thoughts are not to misrepresent them.

It was a parallel process, a process of inclusion, that one's resultant idea should be adequate, of rejection or exclusion, that this idea should be not redundant, which Socrates applied to practice; exercising, as we see in the Platonic Dialogues, the two opposed functions of συναγωγή and διαίρεσις for the formation of just ideas of Temperance, Wisdom, Bravery, Justice itself—a classification of the phenomena of the entire world of feeling and action. Ideas, if they fulfil their proper purpose, represent to the mind such phenomena, for its convenience, but may easily also misrepresent them. In the transition from the particulars to the general, and again in the transition from the general idea, the mental word, to the spoken or written word, to what we call the definition, a door lies open, both for the adulteration and the diminution of the proper content, of our conception, our definition.

The first growth of the Platonic "ideas," as we see it in Socrates, according to the report of Aristotle, provided against this twofold misrepresentation. Its aim is to secure, in the terms of our discourse with others and with ourselves, precise equivalence to what they denote. It was a "mission" to go about Athens and challenge people to guard the inlets of error, in the passage from facts to their thoughts about them, in the passage from thoughts to words. It was an intellectual gymnastic, to test, more exactly than they were in the habit of doing, the equivalence of words they used so constantly as *Just*, *Brave*, *Beautiful*, to the thoughts they had; of those thoughts to the facts of experience, which it was the business of those thoughts precisely to represent; to clear, the mental air; to arrange the littered work-chamber of the mind.

In many of Plato's Dialogues we see no more than the ordered reflex of this process, informal as it was in the actual practice of Socrates. Out of the accidents of a conversation, as from the confused currents of life and action, the typical forms of the vices and virtues emerge in definite outline. The first contention of *The Repubic*, for instance, is to establish in regard to the nature of Justice, terms as exactly conterminous with thoughts, thoughts as exactly conterminous with moral facts, as the notion of carbon is

for, the naturalist, when it has come to include both charcoal and the diamond, on the basis of the essential law of their operation as experience reveals it. Show us, not merely accidental truths about it; but, by the doing of what (Τί ποιοῦσα) in the very soul of its possessor, itself by itself, Justice is a good, and Injustice a bad thing. That illustrates exactly what is meant by "an idea," the force of "knowledge through ideas," in the particular instance of Justice. It will include perhaps, on the one hand, forms of Justice so remote from the Justice of our everyday experience as to seem inversions of it; it will clearly exclude, on the other hand, acts and thoughts, not it, yet, phenomenally, so like it, as to deceive the very gods; and its area will be expanded sufficiently to include, not the individual only, but the state. And you, the philosophic student, were to do that, not for one virtue only, but for Piety, and Beauty, and the State itself, and Knowledge, and Opinion, and the Good. Nay, you might go on and do the same thing for the physical, when you came to the end of the moral, world, were life long enough, and if you had the humour for it—for Motion, Number, Colour, Sound. That, then, was the first growth of the Platonic ideas, as derived immediately from Socrates, whose formal contribution to philosophy had been "universal definitions," developed "inductively," by the twofold method of "inclusion" and "exclusion."

Aristotle adds, however, that Socrates had stopped at the point here indicated: he had not gone on, like some others, to make those universal notions or definitions "separable"—separable, that is to say, from the particular and concrete instances, from which he had gathered them. Separable: χωριστός (famous word!) that is precisely what general notions become in what is specially called "the Platonic Theory of Ideas." The "Ideas" of Plato are, in truth, neither more nor less than those universal definitions, those universal conceptions, as they look, as they could not but look, amid the peculiar lights and shadows, in the singularly constituted atmosphere, under the strange laws of refraction, and in the proper perspective, of Plato's house of thought. By its peculiarities, subsequent thought—philosophic, poetic, theological—has been greatly influenced; by the intense subjectivities, the accidents,

so to speak, of Plato's genius, of Plato, himself; the ways constitutional with him, the magic or trick of his personality, in regarding the intellectual material he was occupied with—by Plato's psychology. And it is characteristic of him, again, that those peculiarities of his mental attitude are evidenced informally; by a tendency, as we said, by the mere general tone in which he speaks of Beauty, for instance, "as it really is," of all that "really is," under its various forms; a manner of speaking, not explicit, but veiled, in various degrees, under figures, as at the end of the sixth book of *The Republic*, or under mythological fantasies, like those of the *Phaedrus.* He seems to have no inclination for the responsibilities of definite theory; for a system such as that of the Neo-Platonists for instance, his own later followers, who, in a kind of prosaic and cold-blooded transcendentalism, developed as definite philosophic dogma, hard enough in more senses than one, what in Plato is to the last rather poetry than metaphysical reasoning—the irrepressible because almost unconscious poetry, which never deserts him, even when treating of what is neither more nor less than a chapter in the rudiments of logic.

The peculiar development of the Socratic realism by Plato can then only be understood by a consideration of the peculiarities of Plato's genius; how it reacted upon those abstractions; what they came to seem in its peculiar atmosphere. The Platonic doctrine of "Ideas," as was said, is not so much a doctrine, as a way of speaking or feeling about certain elements of the mind; and this temper, this peculiar way of feeling, of speaking, which for most of us will have many difficulties, is not uniformly noticeable in Plato's Dialogues, but is to be found more especially in the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, and in certain books of *The Republic*, above all in the *Phaedrus.* Here is a famous passage from it—

"There (that is to say, at a particular point in a sort of Pythagorean mental pilgrimage through time and space) there, at last, its utmost travail and contest awaits the soul. For the immortal souls, so-called, when they were upon the highest point, passed out and stood (as you might stand upon the outside of a great

hollow sphere) upon the back of the sky. And as they stand there, the revolution of the spheres carries them round, and they behold the things that are beyond the sky. That supercelestial place none of our poets on earth has ever yet sung of, nor will ever sing, worthily. And thus it is: for I must make bold to state the truth, at any rate, especially as it is about *truth*, that I am speaking. For the colourless, and formless, and impalpable Being, being in very truth of (that is, relative to) the soul, is visible by reason alone as one's guide. Centered about that, the generation, or seed, γένος- the people, of true knowledge inhabits this place. As, then, the intelligence of God, which is nourished by pure or unmixed reason and knowlege (ἀκηράτῳ, unmixed with sense) so, the intelligence of every other soul also, which is about to receive that which properly belongs to it, beholding, after long interval, that which is, *loves* it (that's the point!) and by the vision of truth is fed; and fares well, until, in cycle, the revolving movement brings it round again to the same place. And in that journey round it looks upon Justice itself; it looks upon Temperance, upon Knowledge; not that knowledge to which the process of becoming (the law of change, namely, of birth and death and decay) attaches, nor that which is, as it were, one in one thing, another in another, of those things which now we speak of as being, but the knowledge which is in that which in very deed is (τὴν ἐν τῷ ὄ ἐστιν ὂν ὄντως ἐπιστήμην οὖσαν) and having beheld, after the same manner, all other things that really are, and feasted upon them, being passed back again to the interior of the sky, the soul returned home." *Phaedrus*, 247.

Only, as Plato thinks, that return was, in fact, an exile.

There, in that attractive, but perhaps not wholly acceptable, sort of discourse, in some other passages like it, Plato has gone beyond his master Socrates, on two planes or levels, so to speak, of speculative ascent, which we may distinguish from each other, by way of making a little clearer what is in itself certainly so difficult.

For Plato, then, not by way of formal theory, we must remember, but by a turn of thought and speech (while he speaks of them,

in fact) the Socratic "universals," the notions of Justice and the like, are become, first, things in themselves—the real things; and secondly, persons, to be known as persons must be; and to be loved, for the perfections, the visible perfections, we might say—intellectually visible—of their being. "It looks upon Justice itself; it looks upon Temperance; upon Knowledge."

Hitherto, in the Socratic disputations, the ideas had been creations, serviceable creations, of men's thought, of our reason. With Plato, they are the creators of our reason—those treasures of experience, stacked and stored, which, to each one of us, come as by inheritance, or with no proportionate effort on our part, to direct, to enlarge and rationalise, from the first use of language by us, our manner of taking things. For Plato, they are no longer, as with Socrates, the instruments by which we, tabulate and classify and record our experience—mere "marks" of the real things of experience, of what is essential in this or that, and common to every particular that goes by a certain common name; but are themselves rather the proper objects of all true knowledge, and a passage from all merely relative experience to the "absolute." In proportion as they lend themselves to the individual, in his effort to think, they create reason in him; they reproduce the eternal reason for him. For Socrates, as Aristotle understands him, they were still in service to, and valid only in and by, the experience they recorded, with no *locus standi* beyond. For Plato, for Platonists, they are become—Justice and Beauty, and the perfect State, or again Equality (that which we must bring with us, if we are to apprehend sensible instances thereof, but which no two equal things here, two coins, ever really attain) nay, Couch, or Tree, every general thought, or name of a thing, whatever—separate (χωριστός) separable from, as being essentially independent of, the individual mind which conceives them; as also of the particular temporary instances which come under them, come and go, while they remain for ever—those eternal "forms," of Tree, Equality, Justice, and so forth.

That, then, is the first stage, or plane, of Platonic transcendentalism. Our common ideas, without which, in fact, we none of us

could think at all, are not the consequence, not the products, but the cause of our reason in us: we did not make them; but they make us what we are, as reasonable beings. The eternal Being, of Parmenides, one and indivisible, has been diffused, divided, resolved, refracted, differentiated, into the eternal Ideas, a multiple, numerous, stellar world, so to call it—abstract light into stars: Justice, Temperance as it is, Bravery as it is. Permanence, independency, indefectible identity with itself—all those qualities which Parmenides supposed in the one and indivisible reality—belong to every one of those ideas severally.

It was like a recrudescence of polytheism in that abstract world; a return of the many gods of Homer, veiled now as abstract notions. Love, Fear, Confidence, and the like; and as such, the modern anthropologist, our student of the natural history of man, would rank the Platonic theory as but a form of what he calls "animism." Animism, that tendency to locate the movements of a soul like our own in every object, almost in every circumstance, which impresses one with a sense of power, is a condition of mind, of which the simplest illustration is primitive man adoring, as a divine being endowed with will, the meteoric stone that came rushing from the sky. That condition "survives" however, in the negro, who thinks the discharging gun a living creature; as it survives also, more subtly, in the culture of Wordsworth and Shelley, for whom clouds and peaks are kindred spirits; in the pantheism of Goethe; and in Schelling, who formulates that pantheism as a philosophic, a Platonic, theory. Such "animistic" instinct was, certainly, a natural element in Plato's mental constitution—the instinctive effort to find *anima*, the conditions of personality, in whatever pre-occupied his mind, a mind, be it remembered, of which the various functions, as we reckon them, imagination, reason, intuition, were still by no means clearly analysed and differentiated from each other, but participated; all alike and all together, in every single act of mind.

And here is the second stage of the Platonic idealism, the second grade of Plato's departure from the simpler realism of his master, as noted by Aristotle, towards that "intelligible world," opposed by him so constantly to the visible world, into which

many find it so hard to follow him at all, and in which the "ideas" become veritable persons. To speak, to think, to feel, about abstract ideas as if they were living persons; that, is the second stage of Plato's speculative ascent. With the lover, who had graduated, was become a master, in the school, of love, but had turned now to the love of intellectual and strictly invisible things, it was as if the faculty of physical vision, of the bodily eye, were still at work at the very centre of intellectual abstraction. Abstract ideas themselves became animated, living persons, almost corporeal, as if with hands and eyes. And it is, as a consequence, but partly also as a secondary reinforcing cause, of this mental condition, that the idea of Beauty becomes for Plato the central idea; the permanently typical instance of what an idea means; of its relation to particular things, and to the action of our thoughts upon them. It was to the lover dealing with physical beauty, a thing seen, yet unseen—seen by all, in some sense, and yet, truly, by one and not by another, as if through some capricious, personal self-discovery, by some law of affinity between the seer and what is seen, the knowing and the known—that the nature and function of an idea, as such, would come home most clearly. And then, while visible beauty is the clearest, the most certain thing, in the world (lovers will always tell you so) real with the reality of something hot or cold in one's hand, it also comes nearest of all things, so Plato assures us, to its eternal pattern or prototype. For some reason, the eternal idea of beauty had left visible copies of itself, shadows, antitypes, out of all proportion, in their truthfulness and adequacy, to any copy, left here with us, of Justice, for instance, or Equality, or the Perfect State. The typical instance of an abstract idea, yet pre-occupying the mind with all the colour and circumstance of the relationship of person to person, the idea of Beauty, conveyed into the entire theory of ideas, the associations which belong properly to such relationships only. A certain measure of caprice, of capricious preference or repulsion, would thus be naturally incidental to the commerce of men's minds with what really is, with the world in which things really are, only so far as they are truly known. "Philosophers are *lovers* of truth and of that which *is*—impassioned lovers:" Τοῦ ὄντος τε καὶ ἀληθείας ἐραστὰς,

τοὺς φιλοσόφους. They are the cornerstone, as readers of *The Republic* know, of the ideal state—those impassioned lovers, ἐραστὰς, of that which really is, and in comparison wherewith, office, wealth, honour, the love of which has rent Athens, the world, to pieces, will be of no more than secondary importance.

He is in truth, in the power, in the hands, of another, of another will—this lover of the Ideas—attracted, corrected, guided, rewarded, satiated, in a long discipline, that "ascent of the soul into the intelligible world," of which the ways of earthly love (τὰ ἐρωτικὰ) are a true parallel. His enthusiasm of knowledge is literally an *enthusiasm*: has about it that character of possession of one person by another, by which those "animistic" old Greeks explained natural madness. That philosophic enthusiasm, that impassioned desire for true knowledge, is a kind of madness (μανία) the madness to which some have declared great wit, all great gifts, to be always allied—the fourth species of mania, as Plato himself explains in the *Phaedrus.* To natural madness, to poetry and the other gifts allied to it, to prophecy like that of the Delphic pythoness, he has to add, fourthly, the "enthusiasm of the ideas."

"The whole course of our theory hitherto (he there tells us) relates to that fourth form of madness, wherein, when any one, seeing the beauty that is here below, and having a reminiscence of the true, feels, or finds, his wings (πτερῶται) fluttering upwards, in his eagerness to soar above, but unable, like a bird looking towards the sky, heedless of things below, he is charged with unsoundness of mind. I have told how this is the most excellent of all forms of enthusiasm (or possession) both to its possessor and to him who participates in it; how it comes of the noblest causes; and that the lover who has a share of this madness is called a lover of the beautiful. For, as has been said, every soul of man, by its very nature, has seen the things that really are, otherwise it would not have come into this form of life (into a human body). But to rise from things here to the recollection of those, is not an easy matter, for every soul; neither for those which then had but a brief view of things there; nor for such as were unlucky in their

descent hither, so that, through the influence of certain associations, turning themselves to what is not right, they have forgotten the sacred forms which then they saw. Few souls, in truth, remain, to which the gift of reminiscence adequately pertains. These, when they see some likeness of things there, are lost in amazement, and belong no longer to themselves; only, they understand not the true nature of their affection, because they lack discernment. Now, of Justice, and of Temperance, and of all those other qualities which are precious to souls, there is no clear light in their semblances here below, but, through obscure organs, with difficulty, very few, coming to their figures, behold the generation (γένος, the people) of that which is figured. At that moment it was possible to behold Beauty in its clearness, when, with the choir of the blessed following on, ourselves with Zeus, some with one, some with another, of the gods, they looked upon a blissful vision and view, and were made partakers in what it is meet and right to call the most blessed of all mysteries, the which we celebrated, sound and whole then, and untouched by the evil things that awaited us in time to come, as being admitted to mystic sights, whole and sound and at unity with themselves, in pure light gazing on them, being ourselves pure, and unimpressed by this we carry about now and call our body, imprisoned like a fish in its shell.

Let memory be indulged thus far; for whose sake, in regret for what was then, I have now spoken somewhat at length. As regards Beauty, as I said, it both shone out, in its true being, among those other eternal forms; and when we came down hither we apprehended it through the clearest of all our bodily senses, gleaming with utmost brightness. For sight comes to us keenest of all our bodily senses, though Wisdom is not seen by it. Marvellous loves, in truth, would that (namely, Wisdom) have afforded, had it presented any manifest image of itself, such as that of Beauty, had it reached our bodily vision—that, and all those other amiable forms. But now Beauty alone has had this fortune; so that it is the clearest, the most certain, of all things, and the most lovable." *Phaedrus*, 249.

II. *Dialectic*

Three different forms of composition have, under the intellectual conditions of different ages, prevailed—three distinct literary methods, in the presentation of philosophic thought; the metrical form earliest, when philosophy was still a matter of intuition, imaginative, sanguine, often turbid or obscure, and became a *Poem*, Περὶ φύσεως, "Concerning Nature;" according to the manner of Pythagoras, "his golden verses," of Parmenides or Empedokles, after whom Lucretius in his turn modelled the finest extant illustration of that manner of writing, of thinking.

It was succeeded by precisely the opposite manner, when native intuition had shrunk into dogmatic system, the dry bones of which rattle in one's ears, with Aristotle, or Aquinas, or Spinoza, as a formal treatise; the perfected philosophic temper being situate midway between those opposites, in the third essential form of the literature of philosophy, namely the essay; that characteristic literary type of our own time, a time so rich and various in special apprehensions of truth, so tentative and dubious in its sense of their *ensemble* and issues. Strictly appropriate form of our modern philosophic literature, the essay came into use at what was really the invention of the relative, or "modern" spirit, in the Renaissance of the sixteenth century.[3]

The poem, the treatise, the essay: you see already that these three methods of writing are no mere literary accidents, dependent on the personal choice of this or that particular writer, but necessities of literary form, determined directly by matter, as corresponding to three essentially different ways in which the human mind relates itself to truth. If oracular verse, stimulant but enigmatic, is the proper vehicle of enthusiastic intuitions; if the treatise, with its ambitious array of premiss and conclusion, is the natural out-put of scholastic all-sufficiency; so, the form of the essay, as we have it towards the end of the sixteenth century, most significantly in Montaigne, representative essayist because the representative doubter, inventor of the name as, in essence, of the thing—of the essay, in its seemingly modest aim, its really large and adventurous possibilities—is indicative of Montaigne's pe-

culiar function in regard to his age, as in truth the commencement of our own. It provided him with precisely the literary form necessary to a mind for which truth itself is but a possibility, realisable not as general conclusion, but rather as the elusive effect of a particular personal experience; to a mind which, noting faithfully those random lights that meet it by the way, must needs content itself with suspension of judgment, at the end of the intellectual journey, to the very last asking: *Que sais-je*? Who knows?—in the very spirit of that old Socratic contention, that all true philosophy is but a refined sense of one's ignorance.

And as Aristotle is the inventor of the treatise, so the Platonic Dialogue, in its conception, its peculiar opportunities, is essentially an essay—an essay, now and then passing into the earlier form of philosophic poetry, the prose-poem of Heraclitus. There have been effective writers of dialogue since, Bruno, for instance, Berkeley, Landor, with whom, however, that literary form has had no strictly constitutional propriety to the kind of matter it conveyed, as lending itself (that is to say) structurally to a many-sided but hesitant consciousness of the truth. Thus, with Berkeley, its purpose is but to give a popular turn to certain very dogmatic opinions, about which there is no diffidence, there are no half-lights, in the writer's own mind. With Plato, on the other hand, with Plato least of all is the dialogue—that peculiar modification of the essay—anything less than essential, necessary, organic: the very form belongs to, is of the organism of, the matter which it embodies. For Plato's Dialogues, in fact, reflect, they refine upon while they fulfil, they idealise, the actual method, in which, by preference to anything like formal lecturing (the lecture being, so to speak, a treatise in embryo) Socrates conveyed his doctrine to others. We see him in those Dialogues of Plato, still loitering in the public places, the open houses, the suburban roads, of Athens, as if seeking truth from others; seeking it, doubtless, from himself, but along with, and by the help of, his supposed scholars, for whom, indeed, he can but bring their own native conceptions of truth to the birth; but always faithfully reg-

istering just so much light as is given, and, so to speak, never concluding.

The Platonic Dialogue is the literary transformation, in a word, of what was the intimately home-grown method of Socrates, not only of conveying truth to others, but of coming by it for himself. The essence of that method, of "dialectic" in all its forms, as its very name denotes, is dialogue, the habit of seeking truth by means of question and answer, primarily with one's self. Just there, lies the validity of the method—in a dialogue, an endless dialogue, with one's self; a dialogue concerning those first principles, or "universal definitions," or notions, those "ideas," which, according to Plato, are the proper objects of all real knowledge; concerning the adequacy of one's hold upon them; the relationship to them of other notions; the plausible conjectures in our own or other minds, which come short of them; the elimination, by their mere presence in the mind, of positive ignorance or error. Justice, Beauty, Perfect Polity, and the like, in outlines of eternal and absolute certainty—they were to be apprehended by "dialectic," literally, by a method (μέθοδος) a circuitous journey, presented by the Platonic dialogues in its most accomplished literary form.

For the certainty, the absolute and eternal character, of such ideas involved, with much labour and scruple, repeated acts of qualification and correction; many readjustments to experience; expansion, by larger lights from it; those exclusions and inclusions, *debitae naturae* (to repeat Bacon's phrase) demanded, that is to say, by the veritable nature of the facts which those ideas are designed to represent. "Representation" was, in fact, twofold, and comprehended many successive steps under each of its divisions. The thought was to be adjusted, first, to the phenomena, to the facts, daintily, to the end that the said thought might just cover those facts, and no more. To the thought, secondly, to the conception, thus articulated, it was necessary to adjust the term; the term, or "definition," by which it might be conveyed into the mind of another. The dialogue—the freedom, the variety and elasticity, of dialogue, informal, easy, natural, alone afforded the room necessary for that long and complex process. If one, if Socrates, seemed to become the teacher of another, it was but by thinking aloud for

a few moments over his own lesson, or leaning upon that other as he went along that difficult way which each one must really prosecute for himself, however full such comradeship might be of happy occasions for the awakening of the latent knowledge, with which mind is by nature so richly stored. The Platonic Socrates, in fact, does not propose to teach anything: is but willing, "along with you," and if you concur, "to consider, to seek out, what the thing may be. Perchance using our eyes in common, rubbing away, we might cause Justice, for instance, to glint forth, as from fire-sticks."[4]

"And," again, "is not the road to Athens made for conversation?" Yes! It might seem that movement, after all, and any habit that promoted movement, promoted the power, the successes, the fortunate parturition, of the mind. A method such as this, a process (*processus*) a movement of thought, which is the very converse of mathematical or demonstrative reasoning, and incapable therefore of conventional or scholastic form, of "exactness," in fact; which proceeded to truth, not by the analysis and application of an axiom, but by a gradual suppression of error, of error in the form of partial or exaggerated truths on the subject-matter proposed, found its proper literary vehicle in a dialogue, the more flexible the better. It was like a journey indeed, that essay towards Justice, for example, or the true Polity; a journey, not along the simple road to Athens, but to a mountain's top. The proportions, the outline, the relation of the thing to its neighbours—how do the inexperienced in such journeys mistake them, as they climb! What repeated misconceptions, embodying, one by one, some mere particularity of view, the perspective of this or that point of view, forthwith abandoned, some apprehension of mountain form and structure, just a little short, or, it may be, immeasurably short, of what Plato would call the "synoptic" view of the mountain as a whole. From this or that point, some insignificant peak presented itself as the mountain's veritable crest: inexperience would have sworn to the truth of a wholly illusive perspective, as the next turn in the journey assured one. It is only upon the final step, with free view at last on every side, uniting together and justifying all those various, successive, partial apprehensions of the difficult

way—only on the summit, comes the intuitive comprehension of what the true form of the mountain really is; with a mental, or rather an imaginative hold upon which, for the future, we can find our way securely about it; observing perhaps that, next to that final intuition, the first view, the first impression, had been truest about it.

Such, in its full scope, is the journey or pilgrimage, the method (ὁδός, κίνησις, μέθοδος) of the Socratic, of the perfected Platonic dialectic, towards the truth, the true knowledge, of Bravery or Friendship, for instance; of Space or Motion, again, as suggested in the seventh book of *The Republic*; of the ideal City, of the immaculate Beauty. You are going about Justice, for example—that great complex elevation on the level surface of life, whose top, it may be, reaches to heaven. You fancy you have grasped its outline. Ἀλλὰ μεταθώμεθα. You are forced on, perhaps by your companion, a step further, and the view has already changed. "Persevere," Plato might say, "and a step may be made, upon which, again, the whole world around may change, the entire horizon and its relation to the point you stand on—a change from the half-light of conjecture to the full light of indefectible certitude. That, of course, can only happen by a *summary* act of intuition upon the entire perspective, wherein all those partial apprehensions, which one by one may have seemed inconsistent with each other, find their due place, or (to return to the Platonic Dialogue again, to the actual process of dialectic as there exposed) by that final impression of a subject, a theorem, in which the mind attains a hold, as if by a single imaginative act, through all the transitions of a long conversation, upon all the seemingly opposite contentions of all the various speakers at once. We see already why Platonic dialectic—the ladder, as Plato thinks, by which alone we can ascend into the entirely reasonable world (νοητὸς τόπος) beginning with the boyish difficulties and crudities of Meno, for instance, is a process which may go on, at least with those gifted by nature and opportunity, as in the Perfect City—may go on to the close of life, and, as Pythagorean theory suggests, perhaps does not end even then.

The process of dialectic, as represented in the Platonic Dialogues, may seem, therefore, inconsistent with itself, if you isolate this or that particular movement, in what is a very complex process, with many phases of development. It is certainly difficult, and that not merely on a first reading, to grasp the unity of the various statements Plato has made about it. Now it may seem to differ from ordinary reasoning by a certain plausibility only: it is logic, *plus* persuasion; helping, gently enticing, a child out of his natural errors; carefully explaining difficulties by the way, as one can best do, by question and answer with him; above all, never falling into the mistake of the *obscurum per obscurius.* At another time it may seem to aim at plausibility of another sort; at mutual complaisance, as Thrasymachus complains. It would be possible, of course, to present an insincere dialogue, in which certain of the disputants shall be mere men of straw. In the *Philebus* again, dialectic is only the name of the process (described there as exactly, almost as technically, as Aristotle, or some modern master of applied logic, might describe it) of the resolution of a genus into its species. Or it lapses into "eristic"—into an argument for its own sake; or sinks into logomachy, a mere dispute about words. Or yet again, an immense, a boundless promise is made for it, as in the seventh book of *The Republic.* It is a life, a systematised, but comprehensive and far-reaching, intellectual life, in which the reason, nay, the whole nature of man, realises all it was designed to be, by the beatific "vision of all time and all existence."

Now all these varying senses of the word "dialectic" fall within compass, if we remember that for Plato, as for every other really philosophic thinker, method must be *one*; that it must cover, or be understood to cover, the entire process, all the various processes, of the mind, in pursuit of properly representative ideas, of a reasoned reflex of experience; and that for Plato, this process is essentially a long discourse or reasoning of the mind with itself. It is that dynamic, or essential, dialogue of the mind with itself, which lends, or imputes, its active principle to the written or spoken dialogue, which, in return, lends its name to the method it figures—"dialectic." Well! in that long and complex dialogue of

the mind with itself, many persons, so to speak, will necessarily take part; so many persons as there are possible contrasts or shades in the apprehension of some complex subject. The *advocatus diaboli* will be heard from time to time. The dog also, or, as the Greeks said, the wolf, will out with his story against the man; and one of the interlocutors will always be a child, turning round upon us innocently, candidly, with our own admissions, or surprising us, perhaps at the last moment, by what seems his invincible ignorance, when we thought it rooted out of him. There will be a youth, inexperienced in the capacities of language, who will compel us to allow much time to the discussion of words and phrases, though not always unprofitably. And to the last, let us hope, refreshing with his enthusiasm, the weary or disheartened enquirer (who is always also of the company) the rightly sanguine youth, ingenuous and docile, to whom, surely, those friendly living ideas will be willing, longing, to come, after that Platonic law of affinity, so effectual in these matters—ὁμοῖον ὁμοίῳ.

With such a nature above all, bringing with it its felicities of temperament, with the sort of natures (as we may think) which intellectually can but thrive, a method like that, the dialectic method, will also have its felicities, its singular good fortunes. A voyage of discovery, prosecuted almost as if at random, the Socratic or Platonic "dialogue of enquiry," seems at times to be in charge of a kind of "Providence." Or again, it will be as when hunters or bird-catchers "beat the bush," as we say: Plato elaborates that figure in *The Republic.* Only, if they be knowing in the process, a fair percentage of birds will be found and taken. All the chances, or graces, of such a method, as actually followed in a whole life of free enquiry. *The Republic*, for a watchful reader, represents in little. And when, using still another figure, Socrates says: "I do not yet know, myself; but, we must just go where the argument carries us, as a vessel runs before the wind," he breathes the very soul of the "dialectic method"—ὅπη ἂν ὁ λόγος, ὥσπερ πνεῦμα, φέρη, ταύτη ἰτέον.

This dialectic method, this continuous discourse with one's self, being, for those who prosecute it with thoroughness, co-ex-

tensive with life itself—a part of the continuous company we keep with ourselves through life—will have its inequalities; its infelicities; above all, its final insecurity. "We argue rashly and adventurously," writes Plato, most truly, in the *Timaeus*—aye, we, the Platonists, as such, sometimes—"by reason that, like ourselves, our discourses (our Platonic discourses, as such) have much participation in the temerity of chance." Of course, as in any other occasional conversation, with its dependence on the hour and the scene, the persons we are with, the humours of the moment, there will always be much of accident in this essentially informal, this unmethodical method; and, therefore, opportunities for misuse, sometimes consciously. The candid reader notes instances of such, even in *The Republic*, not always on the part of Thrasymachus—in this "new game of chess," played, as Plato puts it, not with counters, but with words, and not necessarily for the prize of truth, but, it may be, for the mere enjoyment of move and counter-move, of check-mating.

Since Zeno's paradoxes, in fact, the very air of Athens was become sophisticated, infected with questionings, often vain enough; and the Platonic method had been, in its measure, determined by (the unfriendly might say, was in truth only a deposit from) that infected air. "Socrates," as he admits, "is easily refuted. Say rather, dear Agathon, that you cannot refute the truth." That is reassuring, certainly! For you might think sometimes, uneasily, of the Platonic Socrates, that, as he says of the Sophist, or of himself perhaps *en caricature* in the *Euthydemus*, "Such is his skill in the war of words, that he can refute any proposition whatever, whether true or false;" that, in short, there is a dangerous facility abroad for proving all things whatever, equally well, of which Socrates, and his presumable allotment of truth, has but the general allotment.

The friendly, on the other hand, might rejoin even then, that, as Lessing suggests, the search for truth is a better thing for us than its possession. Plato, who supposes any knowledge worth the name to be "absolute and eternal;" whose constant contention it is, to separate *longo intervallo*, by the longest possible interval, science (ἐπιστήμη) as the possession of irresistible truth, from any

and every sort of knowledge which falls short of that; would hardly have accepted the suggestion of Lessing. Yet, in spite of all that, in spite of the demand he makes for certainty and exactness and what is absolute, in all real knowledge, he does think, or inclines his reader to think, that truth, precisely because it resembles some high kind of relationship of persons to persons, depends a good deal on the receiver; and must be, in that degree, elusive, provisional, contingent, a matter of various approximation, and of an "economy," as is said; that it is partly a subjective attitude of mind—that philosophic truth consists in the philosophic temper. "Socrates in Plato," remarks Montaigne acutely, "disputes, rather to the profit of the disputants, than of the dispute. He takes hold of the first subject, like one who has a more profitable end in view than to explain it; namely, to clear the understandings that he takes upon him to instruct and exercise."

Just there, in fact, is the justification of Plato's peculiar dialectical method, of its inexactness, its hesitancy, its scruples and reserve, as if he feared to obtrude knowledge on an unworthy receiver. The treatise, as the proper instrument of dogma—the Ethics of Aristotle, the Ethics of Spinoza—begins with a truth, or with a clear conviction of truth, in the axiom or definition, which it does but propose further to explain and apply—The treatise, as the instrument of a dogmatic philosophy *begins* with an axiom or definition: the essay or dialogue, on the other hand, as the instrument of dialectic, does not necessarily so much as conclude in one; like that long dialogue with oneself, that dialectic process, which may be co-extensive with life. It does in truth little more than clear the ground, as we say, or the atmosphere, or the mental tablet, that one may have a fair chance of knowing, or seeing, perhaps: it does but put one into a duly receptive attitude towards such possible truth, discovery, or revelation, as may one day occupy the ground, the tablet—shed itself on the purified air; it does not provide a proposition, nor a system of propositions, but forms a temper.

What Plato presents to his readers is then, again, a paradox, or a reconciliation of opposed tendencies: on one side, the largest

possible demand for infallible certainty in knowledge (it was he fixed that ideal of absolute truth, to which, vainly perhaps, the human mind, as such, aspires) yet, on the other side, the utmost possible inexactness, or contingency, in the method by which actually he proposes to attain it. It has been said that the humour of Socrates, of which the famous Socratic irony—the pretence to have a bad memory, to dislike or distrust long and formal discourse, to have taught nothing, to be but a mid-wife in relation to other people's thoughts—was an element, is more than a mere personal trait; that it was welcome as affording a means of escape from the full responsibilities of his teaching. It belonged, in truth, to the tentative character of dialectic, of question and answer as the method of discovery, of teaching and learning, to the position, in a word, of the philosophic *essayist.* That it was thus, might be illustrated abundantly from the Platonic dialogues. The irony, the Socratic humour, so serviceable to a diffident teacher, are, in fact, Plato's own. Κινδινεύει, "it may chance to be," is, we may notice, a favourite catchword of his. The philosopher of Being, or, of the verb "To be," is after all afraid of saying, "It is."

For, again, person dealing with person—with possible caprice, therefore, at least on one side—or intelligence with intelligence, is what Plato supposes in the reception of truth—that, and not an exact mechanism, a precise machine, operating on, or with, an exactly ponderable matter. He has fears for truth, however carefully considered. To the very last falsehood, will lurk, if not about truth itself, about this or that assent to it. The receiver may add the falsities of his own nature to the truth he receives. The proposition which embodies it very imperfectly, may not look to him, in those dark chambers of his individuality, of himself, into which none but he can ever get, to test the, matter, what it looks to me, or to you. We may not even be thinking of, not looking at, the same thing, when we talk of Beauty, and the like; objects which, after all, to the Platonist are matters of θεωρία, of immediate intuition, of immediate vision, or, as Plato sometimes fancied, of an earlier personal experience; and which, as matter of such intuition, are incapable of analysis, and therefore, properly, incommunicable by words. Place, then, must be left to the last in any legitimate

dialectic process for possible after-thoughts; for the introduction, so to speak, of yet another interlocutor in the dialogue, which has, in fact, no necessary conclusion, and leaves off only because time is up, or when, as he says, one leaves off seeking through weariness (ἀποκάμνων). "What thought can think, another thought can mend." Another turn in the endless road may change the whole character of the perspective. You cannot, as the Sophist proposed to do (that was part of his foolishness) take and put truth into the soul. If you could, it might be established there, only as an "inward lie," as a mistake. "Must I take the argument, and literally insert it into your mind?" asks Thrasymachus. "Heaven forbid," answers Socrates. That is precisely what he fears most, for himself, and for others; and from first to last, demands, as the first condition of comradeship in that long journey in which he conceives teacher and learner to be but fellow-travellers, pilgrims side by side, sincerity, above all sincerity with one's self—that, and also freedom in reply. "Answer what you think, μεγαλοπρεπῶς, liberally." For it is impossible to make way otherwise, in a method which consists essentially in the development of knowledge by question and answer.

Misuse, again, is of course possible in a method which admits of no objective sanction or standard; the success of which depends on a loyalty to one's self, in the prosecution of it, of which no one else can be cognisant. And if we can misuse it with ourselves, how much more certainly can the expert abuse it with another. At every turn of the conversation, a door lies open to sophistry. Sophistry, logomachy, eristic: we may learn what these are, sometimes, from Plato's own practice. That justice is only useful as applied to things useless; that the just man is a kind of thief; and the like; is hardly so much as sophistry. And this too was possible in a method, which, with all its large outlook, has something of the irregularity, the accident, the heats and confusion, of life itself—a method of reasoning which can only in a certain measure be reasoned upon. How different the exactness which Aristotle supposes, and does his best to secure, in scientific procedure! For him, dialectic, Platonic dialectic, is, at best, a part of "eristic"—of the art, or trick, of merely popular and approximate

debate, in matters where science is out of the question, and rhetoric has its office, not in providing for the intelligence, but in moulding the sentiments and the will. Conversely to that absoluteness and necessity which Plato himself supposes in all real knowledge, as "the spectacle of all time and all existence," it might seem that the only sort of truth attainable by his actual method, must be the truth of a particular time and place, for one and not for another. Διάλογος πειραστικός, "a Dialogue of search"—every one of Plato's Dialogues is in essence such like that whole, life-long, endless dialogue which dialectic, in its largest scope, does but formulate, and in which truly the last, the infallible word, after all, never gets spoken. Our pilgrimage is meant indeed to end in nothing less than the *vision* of what we seek. But can we ever be quite sure that we are really come to that? By what sign or test?

Now oppose all this, all these peculiarities of the Platonic method, as we find it, to the exact and formal method of Aristotle, of Aquinas, of Spinoza, or Hegel; and then suppose one trained exclusively on Plato's dialogues. Is it the eternal certainty, after all, the immutable and absolute character of truth, as Plato conceived it, that he would be likely to apprehend? We have here another of those contrasts of tendency, constitutional in the genius of Plato, and which may add to our interest in him. Plato is to be explained, as we say, or interpreted, partly through his predecessors, and his contemporaries; but in part also by his followers, by the light his later mental kinsmen throw back on the conscious or unconscious drift of his teaching. Now there are in the history of philosophy two opposite Platonic traditions; two legitimate yet divergent streams of influence from him. Two very different yet equally representative scholars we may see in thought emerging from his school. The "theory of the Ideas," the high ideal, the uncompromising demand for absolute certainty, in any truth or knowledge worthy of the name; the immediate or intuitive character of the highest acts of knowledge; that all true theory is indeed "vision"—for the maintenance of that side of the Platonic position we must look onward to Aristotle, and the Schoolmen of all ages, to Spinoza, to Hegel; to those mystic aspirants to "vi-

sion" also, the so-called Neo-Platonists of all ages, from Proclus to Schelling. From the abstract, metaphysical systems of those, the ecstasy and illuminism of these, we may mount up to the actual words of Plato in the *Symposium*, the fifth book of *The Republic*, the *Phaedrus.*

But it is in quite different company we must look for the tradition, the development, of Plato's actual method of learning and teaching. The Academy of Plato, the established seat of his philosophy, gave name to a school, of which Lucian, in Greek, and in Latin, Cicero, are the proper representatives—Cicero, the perfect embodiment of what is still sometimes understood to be the "academic spirit," surveying all sides, arraying evidence, ascertaining, measuring, balancing, tendencies, but ending in suspension of judgment. If Platonism from age to age has meant, for some, ontology, a doctrine of "being," or the nearest attainable approach to or substitution for that; for others, Platonism has been in fact only another name for scepticism, in a recognisable philosophic tradition. Thus, in the Middle Age, it qualifies in the *Sic et Non* the confident scholasticism of Abelard. It is like the very trick and impress of the Platonic Socrates himself again, in those endless conversations of Montaigne—that typical sceptic of the age of the Renaissance—coversations with himself, with the living, with the dead through their writings, which his *Essays* do but reflect. Typical Platonist or sceptic, he is therefore also the typical essayist. And the sceptical philosopher of Bordeaux does but commence the modern world, which, side by side with its metaphysical reassertions, from Descartes to Hegel, side by side also with a constant accumulation of the sort of certainty which is afforded by empirical science, has had assuredly, to check wholesomely the pretensions of one and of the other alike, its doubts—"Their name is legion," says a modern writer. Reverent and irreverent, reasonable and unreasonable, manly and unmanly, morbid and healthy, guilty and honest, wilful, inevitable—they have been called, indifferently, in an age which thirsts for intellectual security, but cannot make up its mind. *Que sais-je*? it cries, in the words of Montaigne; but in the spirit also of the Platonic Socrates,

with whom such dubitation had been nothing less than a religious duty or service.

Sanguine about any form of absolute knowledge, of eternal, or indefectible, or immutable truth, with our modern temperament as it is, we shall hardly become, even under the direction of Plato, and by the reading of the Platonic Dialogues. But if we are little likely to realise in his school, the promise of "ontological" science, of a "doctrine of Being," or any increase in our consciousness of metaphysical security, are likely, rather, to acquire there that other sort of Platonism, a habit, namely, of tentative thinking and suspended judgment, if we are not likely to enjoy the vision of his "eternal and immutable ideas," Plato may yet promote in us what we call "ideals"—the aspiration towards a more perfect Justice, a more perfect Beauty, physical and intellectual, a more perfect condition of human affairs, than any one has ever yet seen; that κόσμος, in which things *are* only as they are *thought* by a perfect mind, to which experience is constantly approximating us, but which it does not provide. There they stand, the two great landmarks of the intellectual or spiritual life as Plato conceived it: the ideal, the world of "ideas," "the great perhaps," for which it is his merit so effectively to have opened room in the mental scheme, to be known by us, if at all, through our affinities of nature with it, which, however, in our dealings with ourselves and others we may assume to be objective or real—and then, over against our imperfect realisation of that ideal, in ourselves, in nature and history, amid the personal caprices (it might almost seem) of its discovery of itself to us, as the appropriate attitude on our part, the dialectical spirit, which to the last will have its diffidence and reserve, its scruples and second thoughts. Such condition of suspended judgment indeed, in its more genial development and under felicitous culture, is but the expectation, the receptivity, of the faithful scholar, determined not to foreclose what is still a question—the "philosophic temper," in short, for which a survival of query will be still the salt of truth, even in the most absolutely ascertained knowledge.

Chapter Eight

Lacedaemon

"Among the Greeks, philosophy has flourished longest, and is still most abundant, at Crete and Lacedaemon; and there there are more teachers of philosophy than anywhere else in the world. But the Lacedaemonians deny this, and pretend to be unlearned people, lest it should become manifest that it is through philosophy they are supreme in Greece; that they may be thought to owe their supremacy to their fighting and manly spirit, for they think that if the means of their superiority were made known all the Greeks would practise this. But now, by keeping it a secret, they have succeeded in misleading the Laconisers in the various cities of Greece, and in imitation of them these people buffet themselves, and practise gymnastics, and put on boxing-gloves, and wear short cloaks, as if it were by such things that the Lacedaemonians excel all other Greeks. But the Lacedaemonians, when they wish to have intercourse with their philosophers without reserve, and are weary of going to them by stealth, make legal proclamation that those Laconisers should depart, with any other aliens who may be sojourning among them, and thereupon betake themselves to their sophists unobserved by strangers. And you may know that what I say is true, and that the Lacedaemonians are better instructed than all other people in philosophy and the art of discussion in this way. If any one will converse with even the most insignificant of the Lacedaemonians, he may find him indeed in the greater part of what he says seemingly but a poor creature; but then at some chance point in the conversation he will throw in some brief compact saying, worthy of remark, like a clever archer, so that his interlocutor shall seem no better than a child. Of this fact some both of those now living and of the ancients have been aware, and

that to Laconise consists in the study of philosophy far rather than in the pursuit of gymnastic, for they saw that to utter such sayings as those was only possible for a perfectly educated man. Of these was Thales of Miletus, Pittacus of Mytilene, Bias the Prienean, and our own Solon, Cleobulus the Lindian, and Myson of Chen, and the seventh among them was called Chilon, a Lacedaemonian. These were all zealous lovers and disciples of the culture of the Lacedaemonians. And any one may understand that their philosophy was something of this kind, short rememberable sayings uttered by each of them. They met together and offered these in common, as the first fruits of philosophy, to Apollo in his temple at Delphi, and they wrote upon the walls these sayings known and read of all men: Γνῶθι σαυτόν and Μηδὲν ἄγαν." *Protagoras*, 343.

Of course there is something in that of the romance to which the genius of Plato readily inclined him; something also of the Platonic humour or irony, which suggests, for example, to Meno, so anxious to be instructed in the theory of virtue, that the philosophic temper must be departed from Attica, its natural home, to Thessaly—to the rude northern capital whence that ingenuous youth was freshly arrived. Partly romantic, partly humorous, in his Laconism, Plato is however quite serious in locating a certain spirit at Lacedaemon of which his own ideal Republic would have been the completer development; while the picture he draws of it presents many a detail taken straight from Lacedaemon as it really was, as if by an admiring visitor, who had in person paced the streets of the Dorian metropolis it was so difficult for any alien to enter. What was actually known of that stern place, of the Lacedaemonians at home, at school, had charmed into fancies about it other philosophic theorists; Xenophon for instance, who had little or nothing of romantic tendency about them.

And there was another sort of romancing also, quite opposite to this of Plato, concerning the hard ways among themselves of those Lacedaemonians who were so invincible in the field. "The Lacedaemonians," says Pausanias, "appear to have admired least of all people poetry and the praise which it bestows." "At

Lacedaemon there is more philosophy than anywhere else in the world," is what Plato, or the Platonic Socrates, had said. Yet, on the contrary, there were some who alleged that true Lacedaemonians—Lacedaemonian nobles—for their protection against the "effeminacies" of culture, were denied all knowledge of reading and writing. But then we know that written books are properly a mere assistant, sometimes, as Plato himself suggests, a treacherous assistant, to memory; those conservative Lacedaemonians being, so to speak, the people of memory pre-eminently, and very appropriately, for, whether or not they were taught to read and write, they were acknowledged adepts in the Pythagorean philosophy, a philosophy which attributes to memory so preponderating a function in the mental life. "Writing," says K. O. Müller in his laborious, yet, in spite of its air of coldness, passably romantic work on *The Dorians*—an author whose quiet enthusiasm for his subject resulted indeed in a patient scholarship which well befits it: "Writing," he says, "was not essential in a nation where laws, hymns, and the praises of illustrious men—that is, jurisprudence and history—were taught in their schools of music." Music, which is or ought to be, as we know, according to those Pythagorean doctrines, itself the essence of all things, was everywhere in the Perfect City of Plato; and among the Lacedaemonians also, who may be thought to have come within measurable distance of that Perfect City, though with no conscious theories about it, music (μουσικὴ) in the larger sense of the word, was everywhere, not to alleviate only but actually to promote and inform, to be the very substance of their so strenuous and taxing habit of life. What was this "music," this service or culture of the Muses, this harmony, partly moral, doubtless, but also throughout a matter of elaborate movement of the voice, of musical instruments, of all beside that could in any way be associated to such things—this music, for the maintenance, the perpetual sense of which those vigorous souls were ready to sacrifice so many opportunities, privileges, enjoyments of a different sort, so much of their ease, of themselves, of one another?

Platonism is a highly conscious reassertion of one of the two constituent elements in the Hellenic genius, of the spirit of the highlands namely in which the early Dorian forefathers of the Lacedaemonians had secreted their peculiar disposition, in contrast with the mobile, the marine and fluid temper of the littoral Ionian people. *The Republic* of Plato is an embodiment of that Platonic reassertion or preference, of Platonism, as the principle of a society, ideal enough indeed, yet in various degrees practicable. It is not understood by Plato to be an erection *de novo*, and therefore only on paper. Its foundations might be laid in certain practicable changes to be enforced in the old schools, in a certain reformed music which must be taught there, and would float thence into the existing homes of Greece, under the shadow of its old temples, the sanction of its old religion, its old memories, the old names of things. Given the central idea, with its essentially renovating power, the well-worn elements of society as it is would rebuild themselves, and a new colour come gradually over all things as the proper expression of a certain new mind in them.

And in fact such embodiments of the specially Hellenic element in Hellenism, compacted in the natural course of political development, there had been, though in a less ideal form, in those many Dorian constitutions to which Aristotle refers. To Lacedaemon, in *The Republic* itself, admiring allusions abound, covert, yet bold enough, if we remember the existing rivalry between Athens and her neighbour; and it becomes therefore a help in the study of Plato's political ideal to approach as near as we may to that earlier actual embodiment of its principles, which is also very interesting in itself. The Platonic City of the Perfect would not have been cut clean away from the old roots of national life: would have had many links with the beautiful and venerable Greek cities of past and present. The ideal, poetic or romantic as it might seem, would but have begun where they had left off, where Lacedaemon, in particular, had left off. Let us then, by way of realising the better the physiognomy of Plato's theoretic building, suppose some contemporary student of *The Republic*, a pupil, say! in the Athenian Academy, determined to gaze on the actual face of what has so strong a family likeness to it. Stimu-

lated by his master's unconcealed Laconism, his approval of contemporary Lacedaemon, he is at the pains to journey thither, and make personal inspection of a place, in Plato's general commendations of which he may suspect some humour or irony, but which has unmistakably lent many a detail to his ideal Republic, on paper, or in thought.

He would have found it, this youthful Anacharsis, hard to get there, partly through the nature of the country, in part because the people of Lacedaemon (it was a point of system with them, as we heard just now) were suspicious of foreigners. Romantic dealers in political theory at Athens were safe in saying pretty much what they pleased about its domestic doings. Still, not so far away, made, not in idea and by the movements of an abstract argument, the mere strokes of a philosophic pen, but solidified by constancy of character, fortified anew on emergency by heroic deeds, for itself, for the whole of Greece, though with such persistent hold throughout on an idea, or system of ideas, that it might seem actually to have come ready-made from the mind of some half-divine Lycurgus, or through him from Apollo himself, creator of that music of which it was an example—there, in the hidden valley of the Eurotas, it was to be found, as a visible centre of actual human life, the place which was alleged to have come, harsh paradox as it might sound to Athenian ears, within measurable distance of civic perfection, of the political and social ideal.

Our youthful academic adventurer then, making his way along those difficult roads, between the ridges of the Eastern Acadian Mountains, and emerging at last into "hollow" Laconia, would have found himself in a country carefully made the most of by the labour of serfs; a land of slavery, far more relentlessly organised according to law than anywhere else in Greece, where, in truth, for the most part slavery was a kind of accident. But whatever rigours these slaves of Laconia were otherwise subjected to, they enjoyed certainly that kind of well-being which does come of organisation, from the order and regularity of system, living under central military—authority, and bound themselves to military service; to furnish (as under later feudal institutions) so many efficient men-at-arms on demand, and maintain themselves in

readiness for war as they laboured in those distantly-scattered farms, seldom visited by their true masters from Lacedaemon, whither year by year they sent in kind their heavy tribute of oil, barley and wine. The very genius of conservatism here enthroned, secured, we may be sure, to this old-fashioned country life something of the personal dignity, of the enjoyments also, natural to it; somewhat livelier religious feasts, for example, than their lords allowed themselves. Stray echoed of their boisterous plebeian mirth on such occasions have reached us in Greek literature.

But if the traveller had penetrated a little more closely he would have been told certain startling stories, with at least a basis of truth in them, even as regards the age of Plato. These slaves were *Greeks*: no rude Scythians, nor crouching, decrepit Asiatics, like ordinary prisoners of war, the sort of slaves you could buy, but genuine Greeks, speaking their native tongue, if with less of muscular tension and energy, yet probably with pleasanter voice and accent than their essentially highland masters. Physically they throve, under something of the same discipline which had made those masters the masters also of all Greece. They saw them now and then—their younger lords, brought, under strict tutelage, on those long hunting expeditions, one of their so rare enjoyments, prescribed for them, as was believed, by the founder of their polity. But sometimes (here was the report which made one shudder even in broad daylight, in those seemingly reposeful places) sometimes those young nobles of Lacedasmon reached them on a different kind of pursuit: came by night, secretly, though by no means contrarily to the laws of a state crafty as it was determined, to murder them at home, or a certain moiety of them; one here or there perhaps who, with good Achaean blood in his veins, and under a wholesome mode of life, was grown too tall, or too handsome, or too fruitful a father, to feel quite like a slave. Under a sort of slavery that makes him strong and beautiful, where personal beauty was so greatly prized, his masters are in fact jealous of him.

But masters thus hard to others, these Lacedaemonians, as we know, were the reverse of indulgent to themselves. While, as a

matter of theory, power and privilege belonged exclusively to the old, to the Seniors (οἱ γέροντες, ἡ γερουσία) ruling by a council wherein no question might be discussed, one might only deliver one's Aye! or No! Lacedaemon was in truth before all things an organised place of discipline, an organised opportunity also, for youth, for the sort of youth that knew how to command by serving—a constant exhibition of youthful courage, youthful self-respect, yet above all of true youthful docility; youth thus committing itself absolutely, soul and body, to a corporate sentiment in its very sports. There was a third sort of regulation visits the lads of Lacedaemon were driven to pay to those country places, the vales, the uplands, when, to brace youthful stomachs and develope resource, they came at stated intervals as a kind of mendicants or thieves, feet and head uncovered through frost and heat, to steal their sustenance, under penalties if detected—"a survival," as anthropologists would doubtless prove, pointing out collateral illustrations of the same, from a world of purely animal courage and keenness. Whips and rods used in a kind of monitorial system by themselves had a great part in the education of these young aristocrats, and, as pain surely must do, pain not of bodily disease or wretched accidents, but as it were by dignified rules of art, seem to have refined them, to have made them observant of the minutest direction in those musical exercises, wherein eye and ear and voice and foot all alike combined. There could be nothing παραλειπόμενον, as Plato says, no "oversights," here. No! every one, at every moment, quite at his best; and, observe especially, with no superfluities; seeing that when we have to do with music of any kind, with matters of art, in stone, in words, in the actions of life, all superfluities are in very truth "superfluities of naughtiness," such as annihilate music.

The country through which our young traveller from his laxer school of Athens seeks his way to Lacedaemon, this land of a noble slavery, so peacefully occupied but for those irregular nocturnal terrors, was perhaps the loveliest in Greece, with that peculiarly blent loveliness, in which, as at Florence, the expression of a luxurious lowland is duly checked by the severity of its mountain barriers. It was a type of the Dorian purpose in life—stern-

ness, like sea-water infused into wine, overtaking a matter naturally rich, at the moment when fulness may lose its savour and expression. Amid the corn and oleanders—corn "so tall, close, and luxuriant," as the modern traveller there still finds-it was visible at last, Lacedaemon, κοίλη Σπάρτη, "hollow Sparta," under the sheltering walls of Taygetus, the broken and rugged forms of which were attributed to earthquake, but without proper walls of its own. In that natural fastness, or trap, or falcon's nest, it had no need of them, the falcon of the land, with the hamlets (πολίχνια) a hundred and more, dispersed over it, in jealously enforced seclusion from one another.

From the first he notes "the antiquated appearance" of Lacedaemon, by no means a "growing" place, always rebuilding, remodelling itself, after the newest fashion, with shapeless suburbs stretching farther and farther on every side of it, grown too large perhaps, as Plato threatens, to be a body, a corporate unity, at all: not that, but still, and to the last, itself only a great village, a solemn, ancient, mountain village. Even here of course there had been movement, some sort of progress, if so it is to be called, linking limb to limb; but long ago. Originally a union, after the manner of early Rome, of perhaps three or four neighbouring villages which had never lost their physiognomy, like Rome it occupied a group of irregular heights, the outermost roots of Taygetus, on the bank of a river or mountain torrent, impetuous enough in winter, a series of wide shallows and deep pools in the blaming summer. It was every day however, all the year round, that Lacedaemonian youth plunged itself in the Eurotas. Hence, from this circumstance of the union there of originally disparate parts, the picturesque and expressive irregularity, had they had time to think it such, of the "city" properly so termed, the one open place or street. High Street, or *Corso*—Aphetais by name, lined, irregularly again, with various religious and other monuments. It radiated on all sides into a mazy coil, an ambush, of narrow crooked lanes, up and down, in which attack and defence would necessarily be a matter of hand-to-hand fighting. In the outskirts lay the citizens' houses, roomier far than those of Athens, with spacious, walled courts, almost in the country. Here, in contrast to the homes

of Athens, the legitimate wife had a real dignity, the unmarried woman a singular freedom. There were no door-knockers: you shouted at the outer gate to be let in. Between the high walls lanes passed into country roads, sacred ways to ancient sacro-sanct localities, Therapnae, Amyclae, on this side or that, under the shade of mighty plane-trees.

Plato, as you may remember, gives a hint that, like all other visible things, the very trees—how they grow—exercise an aesthetic influence on character. The diligent legislator therefore would have his preferences, even in this matter of the trees under which the citizens of the Perfect City might sit down to rest. What trees? you wonder. The olive? the laurel, as if wrought in grandiose metal? the cypress? that came to a wonderful height in Dorian Crete: the oak? we think it very expressive of strenuous national character. Well! certainly the plane-tree for one, characteristic tree of Lacedaemon then and now; a very tranquil and tranquillising object, spreading its level or gravely curved masses on the air as regally as the tree of Lebanon itself. A vast grove of such was the distinguishing mark of Lacedaemon in any distant view of it; that, and, as at Athens, a colossal image, older than the days of Phidias-the *Demos* of Lacedaemon, it would seem, towering visibly above the people it protected. Below those mighty trees, on an island in their national river, were the "playing-fields," where Lacedaemonian youth after sacrifice in the *Ephebeum* delighted others rather than itself (no "shirking" was allowed) with a sort of football, under rigorous self-imposed rules—tearing, biting—a sport, rougher even than our own, *et même très dangereux*, as our Attic neighbours, the French, say of the English game.

They were orderly enough perforce, the boys, the young men, within the city—seen, but not heard, except under regulations, when they made the best music in the world. Our visitor from Athens when he saw those youthful soldiers, or military students, as Xenophon in his pretty treatise on the polity of Lacedaemon describes, walking with downcast eyes, their hands meekly hidden in their cloaks, might have thought them young monks, had he known of such.

A little mountain town, however ambitious, however successful in its ambition, would hardly be expected to compete with Athens, or Corinth, itself a Dorian state, in art-production, yet had not only its characteristic preferences in this matter, in plastic and literary art, but had also many venerable and beautiful buildings to show. The Athenian visitor, who is standing now in the central space of Lacedaemon, notes here, as being a trait also of the "Perfect City" of academic theory, that precisely because these people find themselves very susceptible to the influences of form and colour and sound, to external aesthetic influence, but have withal a special purpose, a certain strongly conceived disciplinary or ethic ideal, that therefore a peculiar humour prevails among them, a self-denying humour, in regard to these things. Those ancient Pelopid princes, from whom the hereditary kings of historic Lacedasmon, come back from exile into their old home, claim to be descended, had had their palaces, with a certain Homeric, Asiatic splendour, of wrought metal and the like; considerable relics of which still remained, but as public or sacred property now. At the time when Plato's scholar stands before them, the houses of these later historic kings—two kings, as you remember, always reigning together, in some not quite clearly evolved differentiation of the temporal and spiritual functions—were plain enough; the royal doors, when beggar or courtier approached them, no daintier than Lycurgus had prescribed for all true Lacedaemonian citizens; rude, strange things to look at, fashioned only, like the ceilings within, with axe and saw, of old mountain oak or pine from those great Taygetan forests, whence came also the abundant iron, which this stern people of iron and steel had super-induced on that earlier dreamy age of silver and gold—steel, however, admirably tempered and wrought in its application to military use, and much sought after throughout Greece.

Layer upon layer, the relics of those earlier generations, a whole succession of remarkable races, lay beneath the strenuous footsteps of the present occupants, as there was old poetic legend in the depths of their seemingly so practical or prosaic souls. Nor beneath their feet only: the relics of their worship, their sanctuaries, their tombs, their very houses, were part of the scenery of

actual life. Our young Platonic visitor from Athens, climbing through those narrow winding lanes, and standing at length on the open platform of the Aphetais, finds himself surrounded by treasures, modest treasures of ancient architecture, dotted irregularly here and there about him, as if with conscious design upon picturesque effect, such irregularities sometimes carrying in them the secret of expression, an accent. Old Alcman for one had been alive to the poetic opportunities of the place; boasts that he belongs to Lacedaemon, "abounding in sacred tripods;" that it was here the Heliconian Muses had revealed themselves to him. If the private abodes even of royalty were rude it was only that the splendour of places dedicated to religion and the state might the more abound. Most splendid of them all, the *Stoa Paekile*, a cloister or portico with painted walls, to which the spoils of the Persian war had been devoted, ranged its pillars of white marble on one side of the central space: on the other, connecting those high memories with the task of the living, lay the *Choros*, where, at the *Gymnopaedia*, the Spartan youth danced in honour of Apollo.

Scattered up and down among the monuments of victory in battle were the *heroa*, tombs or chapels of the heroes who had purchased it with their blood—Pausanias, Leonidas, brought home from Thermopylae forty years after his death. "A pillar too," says Pausanias, "is erected here, on which the paternal names are inscribed of those who at Thermopylas sustained the attack of the Medes." Here in truth all deities put on a martial habit—Aphrodite, the Muses, Eros himself, Athene Chalcioecus, Athene of the Brazen House, an antique temple towering above the rest, built from the spoils of some victory long since forgotten. The name of the artist who made the image of the tutelary goddess was remembered in the annals of early Greek art, Gitiades, a native of Lacedaemon. He had composed a hymn also in her praise. Could we have seen the place he had restored rather than constructed, with its covering of mythological reliefs in brass or bronze, perhaps Homer's descriptions of a seemingly impossible sort of metallic architecture would have been less taxing to his reader's imagination. Those who in other places had lost their taste amid the facile splendours of a later day, might here go to school again.

Throughout Greece, in fact, it was the Doric style which came to prevail as the religious or hieratic manner, never to be surpassed for that purpose, as the Gothic style seems likely to do with us. Though it is not exclusively the invention of Dorian men, yet, says Müller, "the Dorian character created the Doric architecture," and he notes in it, especially, the severity of the perfectly straight, smartly tapering line of its column; the bold projection of the capital; the alternation of long unornamented plain surfaces with narrower bands of decorated work; the profound shadows; the expression of security, of harmony, infused throughout; the magnificent pediment crowning the whole, like the cornice of mountain wall beyond, around, and above it. Standing there in the Aphetais, amid these venerable works of art, the visitor could not forget the natural architecture about him. As the Dorian genius had differentiated itself from the common Hellenic type in the heart of the mountains of Epirus, so here at last, in its final and most characteristic home, it was still surrounded by them—ὀφρυᾶ τε καὶ κοιλαίνεται.

We know, some of us, what such mountain neighbourhood means. The wholesome vigour, the clearness and purity they maintain in matters such as air, light, water; how their presence multiplies the contrasts, the element of light and shadow, in things; the untouched perfection of the minuter ornament, flower or crystal, they permit one sparingly; their reproachful aloofness, though so close to us, keeping sensitive minds at least in a sort of moral alliance with their remoter solitudes. "The whole life of the Lacedaemonian community," says Müller, "had a secluded, impenetrable, and secret character." You couldn't really know it unless you were of it.

A system which conceived the whole of life as matter of attention, patience, a fidelity to detail, like that of good soldiers and musicians, could not but tell also on the merest handicrafts, constituting them in the fullest sense of a *craft.* If the money of Sparta was, or had recently been, of cumbrous iron, that was because its trade had a sufficient variety of stock to be mainly by barter, and we may suppose the market (into which, like our own academic youth at Oxford, young Spartans were forbidden to go) full enough

of business—many a busy workshop in those winding lanes. The lower arts certainly no true Spartan might practise; but even Helots, artisan Helots, would have more than was usual elsewhere of that sharpened intelligence and the disciplined hand in such labour which really dignify those who follow it. In Athens itself certain Lacedaemonian commodities were much in demand, things of military service or for every-day use, turned out with flawless adaptation to their purpose.

The Helots, then, to whom this business exclusively belonged, a race of slaves, distinguishable however from the slaves or serfs who tilled the land, handing on their mastery in those matters in a kind of guild, father to son, through old-established families of flute-players, wine-mixers, bakers, and the like, thus left their hereditary lords, *Les Gens Fleur-de-lisés* (to borrow an expression from French feudalism) in unbroken leisure, to perfect themselves for the proper functions of gentlemen—σχολή, leisure, in the two senses of the word, which in truth involve one another—their whole time free, to be told out in austere schools. Long easeful nights, with more than enough to eat and drink, the "illiberal" pleasures of appetite, as Aristotle and Plato agree in thinking them, are of course the appropriate reward or remedy of those who work painfully with their hands, and seem to have been freely conceded to those Helots, who by concession of the State, from first to last their legal owner, were in domestic service, and sometimes much petted in the house, though by no means freely conceded to the "golden youth" of Lacedaemon—youth of gold, or gilded steel. The traditional Helot, drunk perforce to disgust his young master with the coarseness of vice, is probably a fable; and there are other stories full of a touching spirit of natural service, of submissiveness, of an instinctively loyal admiration for the brilliant qualities of one trained perhaps to despise him, by which the servitor must have become, in his measure, actually a sharer in them. Just here, for once, we see that slavish ἦθος, the servile range of sentiment, which ought to accompany the condition of slavery, if it be indeed, as Aristotle supposes, one of the natural relationships between man and man, idealised, or aesthetically right, pleasant and proper; the ἀρετή, or "best possible condition," of the young

servitor as such, including a sort of bodily worship, and a willingness to share the keen discipline which had developed the so attractive gallantry of his youthful lords.

A great wave, successive waves, of invasion, sufficiently remote to have lost already all historic truth of detail, had left them—these Helots, and the Perioeci, in the country round about—thus to serve among their own kinsmen, though so close to them in lineage, so much on a level with their masters in essential physical qualities that to the last they could never be entirely subdued in spirit. Patient modern research, following the track of a deep-rooted national tradition veiled in the mythological figments which centre in what is called "The Return of the Heraclidae," reveals those northern immigrants or invaders, at various points on their way, dominant all along it, from a certain deep vale in the heart of the mountains of Epirus southwards, gradually through zone after zone of more temperate lowland, to reach their perfection, highlanders from first to last, in this mountain "hollow" of Lacedaemon. They claim supremacy, not as Dorian invaders, but as kinsmen of the old Achaean princes of the land; yet it was to the fact of conquest, to the necessity of maintaining a position so strained, like that, as Aristotle expressly pointed out, of a beleaguered encampment in an enemy's territory, that the singular institutions of Lacedaemon, the half-military, half-monastic spirit, wliich prevailed in this so gravely beautiful place, had been originally due. But observe!—Its moral and political system, in which that slavery was so significant a factor, its discipline, its aesthetic and other scruples, its peculiar moral ἦθος, having long before our Platonic student comes thither attained its original and proper ends, survived—there is the point! survived as an end in itself, as a matter of sentiment, of public and perhaps still more of personal pride, though of the finer, the very finest sort, in one word as an *ideal.* Pericles, as you remember, in his famous vindication of the Athenian system, makes his hearers understand that the ends of the Lacedaemonian people might have been attained with less self-sacrifice than theirs. But still, there it remained, ἡ δίαιτα Δωρική—the genuine Laconism of the Lacedaemonians themselves, their traditional conception of life, with its earnestness, its

precision and strength, its loyalty to its own type, its impassioned completeness; a spectacle, aesthetically, at least, very interesting, like some perfect instrument shaping to what they visibly were, the most beautiful of all people, in Greece, in the world.

Gymnastic, "bodily exercise," of course, does not always and necessarily effect the like of that. A certain perfectly preserved old Roman mosaic pavement in the Lateran Museum, presents a terribly fresh picture of the results of another sort of "training," the monstrous development by a cruel art, by exercise, of this or that muscle, changing boy or man into a merely mechanic instrument with which his breeders might make money by amusing the Roman people. Victor Hugo's odius dream of *L'homme qui rit*, must have had something of a prototype among those old Roman gladiators. The Lacedaemonians, says Xenophon on the other hand, ὁμόως ἀπό τε τῶν σκελῶν καὶ ἀπὸ χειρῶν καὶ ἀπὸ τραχήλου γυμνάζονται. Here too, that is to say, they aimed at, they found, proportion, Pythagorean symmetry or music, and bold as they could be in their exercises (it was a Lacedaemonian who, at Olympia, for the first time threw aside the heavy girdle and ran naked to the goal) forbade all that was likely to disfigure the body. Though we must not suppose all ties of nature rent asunder, nor all connexion between parents and children in those genial, retired houses at an end in very early life, it was yet a strictly public education which began with them betimes, and with a very clearly defined programme, conservative of ancient traditional and unwritten rules, an aristocratic education for the few, the *liberales*—"liberals," as we may say, in that the proper sense of the word. It made them, in very deed, the lords, the masters, of those they were meant by-and-by to rule; masters, of their very souls, of their imagination, enforcing on them an ideal, by a sort of spiritual authority, thus backing, or backed by, a very effective organisation of "the power of the sword." In speaking of Lacedaemon, you see, it comes naturally to speak out of proportion, it might seem, of its youth, and of the education of its youth. But in fact if you enter into the spirit of Lacedaemonian youth, you may conceive Lacedaemonian manhood for yourselves. You divine already what the boy, the youth, so late in obtaining his

majority, in becoming a man, came to be in the action of life, and on the battle-field. "In a Doric state," says Müller, "education was, on the whole, a matter of more importance than government."

A young Lacedaemonian, then, of the privileged class left his home, his tender nurses in those large, quiet old suburban houses early, for a public school, a schooling all the stricter as years went on, to be followed, even so, by a peculiar kind of barrack-life, the temper of which, a sort of military monasticism (it must be repeated) would beset him to the end. Though in the gymnasia of Lacedaemon no idle bystanders, no—well! Platonic loungers after truth or what not—were permitted, yet we are told, neither there nor in Sparta generally, neither there nor anywhere else, were the boys permitted to be alone. If a certain love of reserve, of seclusion, characterised the Spartan citizen as such, it was perhaps the cicatrice of that wrench from a soft home into the imperative, inevitable gaze of his fellows, broad, searching, minute, his regret for, his desire to regain, moral and mental even more than physical ease. And his education continued late; he could seldom think of marriage till the age of thirty. Ethically it aimed at the reality, aesthetically at the expression, of reserved power, and from the first set its subject on the thought of his personal dignity, of self-command, in the artistic way of a good musician, a good soldier. It is noted that "the general accent of the Doric dialect has itself the character not of question or entreaty, but of command or dictation." The place of deference, of obedience, was large in the education of Lacedaemonian youth; and they never complained. It involved however for the most part, as with ourselves, the government of youth by itself; an implicit subordination of the younger to the older, in many degrees. Quite early in life, at school, they found that superiors and inferiors, ὅμοιοι and ὑπομείονες, there really were; and their education proceeded with systematic boldness on that fact. Εἶρην, μελλείρην, σιδεύνης, and the like—words, titles, which indicate an unflinching elaboration of the attitudes of youthful subordination and command with responsibility—remain as a part of what we might call their "public-school slang." They ate together "in their divisions" (ἀγέλαι) on much the same fare every day at a sort of messes; not

reclined, like Ionians or Asiatics, but like heroes, the princely males, in Homer, sitting upright on their wooden benches; were "inspected" frequently, and by free use of *viva voce* examination "became adepts in presence of mind," in mental readiness and vigour, in the brief mode of speech Plato commends, which took and has kept its name from them; with no warm baths allowed; a daily plunge in their river required. Yes! The beauty of these most beautiful of all people was a male beauty, far remote from feminine tenderness; had the expression of a certain *ascesis* in it; was like unsweetened wine. In comparison with it, beauty of another type might seem to be wanting in edge or accent.

And they could be silent. Of the positive uses of the negation of speech, like genuine scholars of Pythagoras, the Lacedaemonians were well aware, gaining strength and intensity by repression. Long spaces of enforced silence had doubtless something to do with that expressive brevity of utterance, which could be also, when they cared, so inexpressive of what their intentions really were—something to do with the habit of mind to which such speaking would come naturally. In contrast with the ceaseless prattle of Athens, Lacedaemonian assemblies lasted as short a time as possible, all standing. A Lacedaemonian ambassador being asked in whose name he was come, replies: "In the name of the State, if I succeed; if I fail, in my own." What they lost in extension they gained in depth.

Had our traveller been tempted to ask a young Lacedaemonian to return his visit at Athens, permission would have been refused him. He belonged to a community bent above all things on keeping indelibly its own proper colour. Its more strictly mental education centered, in fact, upon a faithful training of the memory, again in the spirit of Pythagoras, in regard to what seemed best worth remembering. Hard and practical as Lacedaemonians might seem, they lived nevertheless very much by imagination; and to train the memory, to preoccupy their minds with the past, as in our own classic or historic culture of youth, was in reality to develope a vigorous imagination. In music (μουσική) as they conceived it, there would be no strictly selfish reading, writing or listening; and if there was little a Lacedaemonian lad had to read

or write at all, he had much to learn, like a true conservative, by heart: those unwritten laws of which the Council of Elders was the authorised depositary, and on which the whole public procedure of the state depended; the archaic forms of religious worship; the names of their kings, of victors in their games or in battle; the brief record of great events; the oracles they had received; the *rhetrai*, from Lycurgus downwards, composed in metrical Lacedaemonian Greek; their history and law, in short, actually set to music, by Terpander and others, as was said. What the Lacedaemonian learned by heart he was for the most part to sing, and we catch a glimpse, an echo, of their boys in school chanting; one of the things in old Greece one would have liked best to see and hear—youthful beauty and strength in perfect service—a manifestation of the true and genuine Hellenism, though it may make one think of the novices at school in some Gothic cloister, of our own old English schools, nay, of the young Lacedaemonian's cousins at Sion, singing there the law and its praises.

The Platonic student of the ways of the Lacedaemonians observes then, is interested in observing, that their education, which indeed makes no sharp distinction between mental and bodily exercise, results as it had begun in "music"—ends with body, mind, memory above all, at their finest, on great show-days, in the dance. Austere, self-denying Lacedaemon had in fact one of the largest theatres in Greece, in part scooped out boldly on the hill-side, built partly of enormous blocks of stone, the foundations of which may still be seen. We read what Plato says in *The Republic* of "imitations," of the imitative arts, imitation reaching of course its largest development on the stage, and are perhaps surprised at the importance he assigns, in every department of human culture, to a matter of that kind. But here as elsewhere to see was to understand. We should have understood Plato's drift in his long criticism and defence of imitative art, his careful system of rules concerning it, could we have seen the famous dramatic Lacedaemonian dancing. They danced a theme, a subject. A complex and elaborate art this must necessarily have been, but, as we may gather, as concise, direct, economically expressive, in all its varied sound and motion, as those swift, lightly girt, *impromptu* Lacedaemonian

sayings. With no movement of voice or hand or foot, παραλειπόμενον, unconsidered, as Plato forbids, it was the perfect flower of their correction, of that minute patience and care which ends in a perfect expressiveness; not a note, a glance, a touch, but told obediently in the promotion of a firmly grasped mental conception, as in that perfect poetry or sculpture or painting, in which "the finger of the master is on every part of his work." We have nothing really like it, and to comprehend it must remember that, though it took place in part at least on the stage of a theatre—was in fact a ballet-dance, it had also the character both of a liturgical service and of a military inspection; and yet, in spite of its severity of rule, was a natural expression of the delight of all who took part in it.

So perfect a spectacle the gods themselves might be thought pleased to witness; were in consequence presented with it as an important element in the religious worship of the Lacedaemonians, in whose life religion had even a larger part than with the other Greeks, conspicuously religious, δεισιδαίμονες, involved in religion or superstition, as the Greeks generally were. More closely even than their so scrupulous neighbours they associated the state, its acts and officers, with a religious sanction, religious usages, theories, traditions. While the responsibilities of secular government lay upon the Ephors, those mysteriously dual, at first sight useless, and yet so sanctimoniously observed kings, "of the house of Heracles," with something of the splendour of the old Achaean or Homeric kings, in life as also in death, the splendid funerals, the passionate archaic laments which then followed them, were in fact of spiritual or priestly rank, the living and active centre of a poetic religious system, binding them "in a beneficent connexion" to the past, and in the present with special closeness to the oracle of Delphi.

Of that catholic or general centre of Greek religion the Lacedaemonians were the hereditary and privileged guardians, as also the peculiar people of Apollo, the god of Delphi; but, observe! of Apollo in a peculiar development ot his deity. In the dramatic business of Lacedaemon, centering in these almost li-

turgical, dances, there was little comic acting. The fondness of the slaves for buffoonery and loud laughter, was to their master, who had no taste for the like, a reassuring note of his superiority. He therefore indulged them in it on occasion, and you might fancy that the religion of a people so strenuous, ever so full of their dignity, must have been a religion of gloom. It was otherwise. The Lacedaemonians, like those monastic persons of whom they so often remind one, as a matter of fact however surprising, were a very cheerful people; and the religion of which they had so much, deeply imbued everywhere with an optimism as of hopeful youth, encouraged that disposition, was above all a religion of sanity. The observant Platonic visitor might have taken note that something of that purgation of religious thought and sentiment, of its expression in literature, recommended in Plato's *Republic*, had been already quietly effected here, towards the establishment of a kind of cheerful daylight in men's tempers.

In furtherance then of such a religion of sanity, of that harmony of functions, which is the Aristotelian definition of health, Apollo, sanest of the national gods, became also the tribal or home god of Lacedaemon. That common Greek worship of Apollo they made especially their own, but (just here is the noticeable point) with a marked preference for the human element in him, for the mental powers of his being over those elemental or physical forces of production, which he also mystically represents, and which resulted sometimes in an orgiastic, an unintellectual, or even an immoral service. He remains youthful and unmarried. In congruity with this, it is, observed that, in a quasi-Roman worship, abstract qualities and relationships, ideals, become subsidiary objects of religious consideration around him, such as sleep, death, fear, fortune, laughter even. Nay, other gods also are, so to speak, Apollinised, adapted to the Apolline presence; Aphrodite armed, Enyalius in fetters, perhaps that he may never depart thence. Amateurs everywhere of the virile element in life, the Lacedaemonians, in truth, impart to all things an intellectual character. Adding a vigorous logic to seemingly animal instincts, for them courage itself becomes, as for the strictly philosophic mind at

Athens, with Plato and Aristotle, an intellectual condition, a form of right knowledge.

Such assertion of the consciously human interest in a religion based originally on a preoccupation with the unconscious forces of nature, was exemplified in the great religious festival of Lacedaemon. As a spectator of the *Hyacinthia*, our Platonic student would have found himself one of a large body of strangers, gathered together from Lacedaemon and its dependent towns and villages, within the ancient precincts of Amyclae, at the season between spring and summer when under the first fierce heat of the year the abundant hyacinths fade from the fields. Blue flowers, you remember, are the rarest, to many eyes the loveliest; and the Lacedaemonians with their guests were met together to celebrate the death of the hapless lad who had lent his name to them, Hyacinthus, son of Apollo, or son of an ancient mortal king who had reigned in this very place; in either case, greatly beloved of the god, who had slain him by sad accident as they played at quoits together delightfully, to his immense sorrow. That Boreas (the north-wind) had maliciously miscarried the discus, is a circumstance we hardly need to remind us that we have here, of course, only one of many transparent, unmistakable, parables or symbols of the great solar change, so sudden in the south, like the story of Proserpine, Adonis, and the like. But here, more completely perhaps than in any other of those stories, the primary elemental sense had obscured itself behind its really tragic analogue in human life, behind the figure of the dying youth. We know little of the details of the feast; incidentally, that Apollo was vested on the occasion in a purple robe, brought in ceremony from Lacedaemon, woven there, Pausanias tells us, in a certain house called from that circumstance *Chiton.* You may remember how sparing these Lacedaemonians were of such dyed raiment, of any but the natural and virgin colouring of the fleece; that purple or red, however, was the colour of their royal funerals, as indeed Amyclae itself was famous for purple stuffs—*Amyclaeae vestes.* As the general order of the feast, we discern clearly a single day of somewhat shrill gaiety, between two days of significant mourning after the manner of All Souls' Day, directed from mimic grief for a mythic

object, to a really sorrowful commemoration by the whole Lacedaemonian people—each separate family for its own deceased members.

It was so again with those other youthful demi-gods, the Dioscuri, themselves also, in old heroic time, resident in this venerable place: *Amyclaei fratres*, fraternal leaders of the Lacedaemonian people. Their statues at this date were numerous in Laconia, or the *docana*, primitive symbols of them, those two upright beams of wood, carried to battle before the two kings, until it happened that through their secret enmity a certain battle was lost, after which one king only proceeded to the field, and one part only of that token of fraternity, the other remaining at Sparta. Well! they were two stars, you know, at their original birth in men's minds, *Gemini*, virginal fresh stars of dawn, rising and setting alternately—those two half-earthly, half-celestial brothers, one of whom, Polydeuces, was immortal. The other, Castor, the younger, subject to old age and death, had fallen in battle, was found breathing his last. Polydeuces thereupon, at his own prayer, was permitted to die: with undying fraternal affection, had forgone one moiety of his privilege, and lay in the grave for a day in his brother's stead, but shone out again on the morrow; the brothers thus ever coming and going, interchangeably, but both alike gifted now with immortal youth.

In their origin, then, very obviously elemental deities, they were thus become almost wholly humanised, fraternised with the Lacedaemonian people, their closest friends of the whole celestial company, visitors, as fond legend told, at their very hearths, found warming themselves in the half-light at their rude fire-sides. Themselves thus visible on occasion, at all times in devout art, they were the starry patrons of all that youth was proud of, delighted in, horsemanship, games, battle; and always with that profound fraternal sentiment. Brothers, comrades, who could not live without each other, they were the most fitting patrons of a place in which friendship, comradeship, like theirs, came to so much, Lovers of youth they remained, those enstarred types of it, arrested thus at that moment of miraculous good fortune as a consecration of the clean, youthful friendship, "passing even the love

of woman," which, by system, and under the sanction of their founder's name, elaborated into a kind of art, became an elementary part of education. A part of their duty and discipline, it was also their great solace and encouragement. The beloved and the lover, side by side through their long days of eager labour, and above all on the battlefield, became respectively, ἀΐτης, the hearer, and εἰσπνήλας, the inspirer; the elder inspiring the younger with his own strength and noble taste in things.

What, it has been asked, what was there to occupy persons of the privileged class in Lacedaemon from morning to night, thus cut off as they were from politics and business, and many of the common interests of men's lives? Our Platonic visitor would have asked rather. Why this strenuous task-work, day after day; why this loyalty to a system, so costly to you individually, though it may be thought to have survived its original purpose; this laborious, endless, education, which does not propose to give you anything very useful or enjoyable in itself? An intelligent young Spartan might have replied: "To the end that I myself may be a perfect work of art, issuing thus into the eyes of all Greece." He might have observed—we may safely observe for him—that the institutions of his country, whose he was, had a beauty in themselves, as we may observe also of some at least of our own institutions, educational or religious: that they bring out, for instance, the lights and shadows of human character, and relieve the present by maintaining in it an ideal sense of the past. He might have added that he had his friendships to solace him; and to encourage him, the sense of honour.

Honour, friendship, loyalty to the ideal of the past, himself as a work of art! There was much of course in his answer. Yet still, after all, to understand, to be capable of, such motives, was itself but a result of that exacting discipline of character we are trying to account for; and the question still recurs, *To what purpose*? Why, with no prospect of Israel's reward, are you as scrupulous, minute, self-taxing, as he? A tincture of asceticism in the Lacedaemonian rule may remind us again of the monasticism of

the Middle Ages. But then, monastic severity was for the purging of a troubled conscience, or for the hope of an immense prize, neither of which conditions is to be supposed here. In fact the surprise of Saint Paul, as a practical man, at the slightness of the reward for which a Greek spent himself, natural as it is about all pagan perfection, is especially applicable about these Lacedaemonians, who indeed had actually invented that so "corruptible" and essentially worthless parsley crown in place of the more tangible prizes of an earlier age. Strange people! Where, precisely, may be the spring of action in you, who are so severe to yourselves; you who, in the words of Plato's supposed objector that the rulers of the ideal state are not to be envied, have nothing you can really call your own, but are like hired servants in your own houses—*qui manducatis panem doloris*?

Another day-dream, you may say, about those obscure ancient people, it was ever so difficult really to know, who had hidden their actual life with so much success; but certainly a quite natural dream upon the paradoxical things we are told of them, on good authority. It is because they make us ask that question; puzzle us by a paradoxical idealism in life; are thus distinguished from their neighbours; that, like some of our old English places of education, though we might not care to live always at school there, it is good to visit them on occasion; as some philosophic Athenians, as we have now seen, loved to do, at least in thought.

Chapter Nine

The Republic

"The Republic," as we may realise it mentally within the limited proportions of some quite imaginable Greek city, is the protest of Plato, in enduring stone, in law and custom more imperishable still, against the principle of flamboyancy or fluidity in things, and in men's thoughts about them. Political "ideals" may provide not only types for new states, but also, in humbler function, a due corrective of the errors, thus renewing the life, of old ones. But like other medicines the corrective or critical ideal may come too late, too near the natural end of things. The theoretic attempt made by Plato to arrest the process of disintegration in the life of Athens, of Greece, by forcing it back upon a simpler and more strictly Hellenic type, ended, so far as they were concerned, in theory.

It comes of Plato's literary skill, his really dramatic handling of a conversation, that one subject rises naturally out of another in the course of it, that in the lengthy span of *The Republic*, though they are linked together after all with a true logical coherency, now justice, now the ideal state, now the analysis of the individual soul, or the nature of a true philosopher, or his right education, or the law of political change, may seem to emerge as the proper subject of the whole book. It is thus incidentally, and by way of setting forth the definition of Justice or Rightness, as if in big letters, that the constitution of the typically Right State is introduced into what, according to one of its traditional titles—Περί Δικαιοσύνης—might actually have figured as a dialogue on the nature of Justice. But τόδ' ἦν ὡς ἔοικε προοίμιον—the discussion of the theory of the abstract and invisible rightness was but to introduce the practical architect, the creator of the right

state. Plato then assumes rather than demonstrates that so facile parallel between the individual consciousness and the social aggregate, passes lightly backwards and forwards from the rightness or wrongness, the normal or abnormal conditions, of the one to those of the other, from you and me to the "colossal man," whose good or bad qualities, being written up there on a larger scale, are easier to read, and if one may say so, "once in bricks and mortar," though but on paper, is lavish of a world as it should be. A strange world in some ways! Let us look from the small type of the individual to the monumental inscription on those high walls, as he proposes; while his fancy wandering further and further, over tower and temple, its streets and the people in them, as if forgetful of his original purpose he tells us all he sees in thought of the City of the Perfect.

To the view of Plato, as of all other Greek citizens, the state, in its local habitation here or there, had been in all cases the gift or ordinance of one or another real though half-divine founder, some Solon or Lycurgus, thereafter a proper object of piety, of filial piety, for ever, among those to whom he had bequeathed the blessings of civilised life. Himself actually of Solon's lineage, Plato certainly is less aware than those who study these matters in the "historic spirit" of the modern world that for the most part, like other more purely physical things, states "are not made, but grow." Yet his own work as a designer or architect of what shall be new is developed quite naturally out of the question how an already existing state, such as the actual Athens of the day, might secure its pre-eminence, or its very existence. Close always, by the concrete turn of his genius, to the facts of the place and the hour, his first thought is to suggest a remedy for the peculiar evils of the Athenians at that moment; and in his delineation of the ideal state he does but elevate what Athens in particular, a ship so early going to pieces, might well be forced to become for her salvation, were it still possible, into the eternal type of veritable statecraft, of a city as such, "a city at unity in itself," defiant of time. He seems to be seeking in the first instance a remedy for the sick, a desperate political remedy; and thereupon, as happens with re-

ally philosophic enquirers, the view enlarges on all sides around him.

Those evils of Athens then, which were found in very deed somewhat later to be the infirmity of Greece, as a whole, when, though its versatile gifts of intellect might constitute it the teacher of its eventual masters, it was found too incoherent politically to hold its own against Rome—those evils of Athens, of Greece, came from an exaggerated assertion of the fluxional, flamboyant, centrifugal Ionian element in the Hellenic character. They could be cured only by a counter-assertion of the centripetal Dorian ideal, as actually seen best at Lacedaemon; by the way of simplification, of a rigorous *limitation* of all things, of art and life, of the souls, aye, and of the very bodies of men, as being the integral factors of all beside. It is in those simpler, corrected outlines of a reformed Athens that Plato finds the "eternal form" of the State, of a city as such, like a well-knit athlete, or one of those perfectly disciplined Spartan dancers. His actual purpose therefore is at once reforming and conservative. The drift of his charge is, in his own words, that no political constitution then existing is suitable to the philosophic, that is to say, as he conceives it, to the aristocratic or kingly nature. How much that means we shall see by and bye, when he maintains that in the City of the Perfect the kings will be philosophers. It means that those called, like the gifted, lost Alcibiades, to be the saviours of the state, as a matter of fact become instead its destroyers. The proper soil in which alone that precious exotic seed, the kingly or aristocratic seed, will attain its proper qualities, in which alone it will not yield wine inferior to its best, or rather, instead of bearing any wine at all, become a deadly poison, is still to be laid down according to rules of art, the ethic or political art; but once provided must be jealously kept from innovation. Organic unity with one's self, body and soul, is the well-being, the rightness, or righteousness, or justice of the individual, of the microcosm; but is the ideal also, it supplies the true definition, of the well-being of the macrocosm, of the social organism, the state. On this Plato has to insist, to the disadvantage of what we actually see in Greece, in Athens, with all its intricacies of disunion, faction against faction, as displayed in the

later books of Thucydides. Remember! the question Plato is asking throughout *The Republic*, with a touch perhaps of the narrowness, the fanaticism, or "fixed idea," of Machiavel himself, is, not how shall the state, the place we must live in, be gay or rich or populous, but strong—strong enough to remain itself, to resist solvent influences within or from without, such as would deprive it not merely of the accidental notes of prosperity but, of its own, very being.

Now what hinders this strengthening macro-cosmic unity, the oneness of the political organism with itself, is that the unit, the individual, the microcosm, fancies itself, or would fain be, a rival macrocosm, independent, many-sided, all-sufficient. To make him that, as you know, had been the conscious aim of the Athenian system in the education of its youth, as also in its later indirect education of the citizen by the way of political life. It was the ideal of one side of the Greek character in general, of much that was brilliant in it and seductive to others. In this sense, Pericles himself interprets the educational function of the city towards the citizen—to take him as he is, and develope him to the utmost on all his various sides, with a variety in those parts however, as Plato thinks, by no means likely to promote the unity of the whole, of the state as such, which must move all together if it is to move at all, at least against its foes. With this at first sight quite limited purpose then, paradoxical as it might seem to those whose very ideal lay precisely in such manifold development, to Plato himself perhaps, manifold as his own genius and culture conspicuously were—paradoxical as it might seem, Plato's demand is for the limitation, the simplifying, of those constituent parts or units; that the unit should be indeed no more than a part, it might be a very small part, in a community, which needs, if it is still to subsist, the wholeness of an army in motion, of the stars in their courses, of well-concerted music, if you prefer that figure, or, as the modern reader might perhaps object, of a machine. The design of Plato is to bring back the Athenian people, the Greeks, to thoughts of order, to disinterestedness in their functions, to that self-concentration of soul on one's own part, that loyal conces-

sion of their proper parts to others, on which such order depends, to a love of it, a sense of its extreme aesthetic beauty and fitness, according to that indefectible definition of Justice, of what is right, το τὸ ἓν πράττειν, τὸ τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττειν, in opposition, as he thinks, to those so fascinating conditions of Injustice, ποικιλία, πλεονεξία, πολυπραγμοσύνη, figuring away, as they do sometimes, so brilliantly.

For Plato would have us understand that men are in truth after all naturally much simpler, much more limited in character and capacity, than they seem. Such diversity of parts and function as is presupposed in his definition of Justice has been fixed by nature itself on human life. The individual, as such, humble as his proper function may be, is unique in fitness for, in a consequent "call" to, that function. We know how much has been done to educate the world, under the supposition that man is a creature of very malleable substance, indifferent in himself, pretty much what influences may make of him. Plato, on the other hand, assures us that no one of us "is like another all in all."—Πρῶτον μὲν φύεται ἕκαστος οὐ πάνυ ὅμοις ἑκαστω, ἀλλὰ διαφέρων τὴν φύσιν, ἄλλος ἐπ ἄλλου ἔργου πρᾶξιν. But, for this, social Justice, according to its eternal form or definition, should in fact be nowhere applicable. Once for all he formulates clearly that important notion of the function, (ἔργον) of a thing, or of a person. It is that which he alone can do, or he better than any one else.

That Plato should exaggerate this definiteness in men's natural vocations, thus to be read as it were in "plain figures" upon each, is one of the necessities of his position. Effect of nature itself, such inequality between men, this differentiation of one from another, is to be further promoted by all the cunning of the political art. The counter-assertion of the natural indifference of men, their pliability to circumstance, while it is certainly truer to our modern experience, is also in itself more hopeful, more congruous with all the processes of education. But for Plato the natural inequality of men, if it is the natural ground of that versatility, (ποικιλία), of the wrongness or Injustice he must needs correct, will be the natural ground of Justice also, as essentially a unity or harmony enforced on disparate elements, unity as of an army, or

an order of monks, organic, mechanic, liturgical, whichever you please to call it; but a kind of music certainly, if the founder, the master, of the state, for his proper part, can but compose the scattered notes.

Just here then is the original basis of society—γίγνεται τοίνυν ὡς ἐγῷμαι πόλις ἐπειδὴ τυγχάνει ἡμων ἕκαστος οὐκ αὐτάρκφς—at first in its humblest form; simply because one can dig and another spin; yet already with anticipations of The Republic, of the City of the Perfect, as developed by Plato, as indeed also, beyond it, of some still more distant system "of the services of angels and men in a wonderful order;" for the somewhat visionary towers of Plato's *Republic* blend of course with those of the *Civitas Dei* of Augustine. Only, though its top may one day "reach unto heaven," it by no means came down thence; but, as Plato conceives, arises out of the earth, out of the humblest natural wants. Grote was right—There is a very shrewd matter-of-fact utilitarian among the *dramatis personae* which together make up the complex genius of Plato. Ποιήσει ὡς ἐγῷμαι τὴν πόλιν ἡμετέρα χρεία—produced by our physical necessities, our inequality in regard to them—an inequality in three broad divisions of unalterable, incommunicable type, of natural species, among men, with corresponding differentiation of political and social functions: three firmly outlined orders in the state, like three primitive castes, propagating, reinforcing, their peculiarities of condition, as Plato will propose, by exclusive intermarriage, each within itself. As in the class of the artisans (οἱ δημιουργοί) some can make swords best, others pitchers, so, on the larger survey, there will be found those who can use those swords, or, again, think, teach, pray, or lead an army, a whole (body of swordsmen, best, thus denning within, impassable barriers) three essential species of citizenship—the productive class, the military order, the governing class thirdly, or spiritual order.

The social system is in fact like the constitution of a human being. There are those who have capacity, a vocation, to conceive thoughts, and rule their brethren by intellectual power. Collectively of course they are the mind or brain, the mental element, in the social organism. There are those secondly, who have by na-

ture executive force, who will naturally wear arms, the sword in the sheath perhaps, but who will also on occasion most certainly draw it. Well, these are like the active passions and the ultimately decisive will in the bosom of man, most, conspicuous as anger—anger, it may be, resentment, against known wrong in another or in one's self, the champion of conscience, flinging away the scabbard, setting the spear against the foe, like a soldier of spirit. They are in a word the conscience, the armed conscience, of the state, nobly bred, sensitive for others and for themselves, informed by the light of reason in their natural kings. And then, thirdly, protected, controlled, by the thought, the will, above them, like those appetites in you and me, hunger, thirst, desire, which have been the motive, the actual creators, of the material order all around us, there will be the "productive" class, labouring perfectly in the cornfields, in the vineyards, or on the vessels which are to contain corn and wine, at a thousand handicrafts, every one still exquisitely differentiated, according to Plato's rule of right—εἰς ἕν κατὰ φύσιν; as within the military class also there will be those who command and those who can but obey, and within the true princely class again those who know all things and others who have still much to learn; those also who can learn and teach one sort of knowledge better than another.

Plato however, in the first steps of the evolution of the State, had lighted quite naturally on what turns out to be a mistaken or inadequate ideal of it, in an idyll pretty enough, indeed, from "The Golden Age."—How sufficient it seems for a moment, that innocent world! is, nevertheless, actually but a false ideal of human society, allowing in fact no place at all for Justice; the very terms of which, precisely because they involve differentiation of life and its functions, are inapplicable to a society, if so it may be called, still essentially inorganic. In a condition, so rudimentary as to possess no opposed parts at all, of course there will be no place for disturbance of parts, for proportion or disproportion of faculty and function. It is, in truth, to a city which has lost its first innocence πόλις ἅδφ τρυφωσα, that we must look for the consciousness of Justice and Injustice; as some theologians or phi-

losophers have held that it was by the "Fall" man first became a really moral being.

Now in such a city, in the πόλις ἥδφ τρυφωσα, there will be an increase of population—καὶ ἡ χώρα που ἡ τότε ἱκανὴ σμικρὰ ἐξ ἱκανῆς ἔσται. And in an age which perhaps had the military spirit in excess Plato's thoughts pass on immediately to wars of aggression—οὔκουν τῆς των πλυσίον χώρας ἡμῖν ἀποτμφτέον? We must take something, if we can, from Megara or from Sparta; which doubtless in its turn would do the same by us. As a measure of relief however that was not necessarily the next step. The needs of an out-pushing population might have suggested to Plato what is perhaps the most brilliant and animating episode in the entire history of Greece, its early colonisation, with all the bright stories, full of the piety, the generosity of a youthful people, that had gathered about it. No, the next step in social development was not necessarily going to war. In either case however, aggressive action against our neighbours, or defence of our distant brethren beyond the seas at Cyrene or Syracuse against rival adventurers, we shall require a new class of persons, men of the sword, to fight for us if need be. Ah! You hear the notes of the trumpet, and therewith already the stir of an enlarging human life, its passions, its manifold interests. Φύλακες or ἐπίκουροι, watchmen or auxiliaries, our new servants comprehend at first our masters to be, whom a further act of differentiation will distinguish as philosophers and kings from the strictly military order. Plato nevertheless in his search for the true idea of Justice, of rightness in things, may be said now to have seen land. Organic relationship is come into the rude social elements and made of them a body, a society. Rudimentary though it may still be, the definition of Justice, as also of Injustice, is now applicable to its processes. There is a music in the affairs of men, in which one may take one's due part, which one may spoil.

Criticising mythology Plato speaks of certain fables, to be made by those who are apt at such things, under proper spiritual authority, so to term it, ὡς ἐν φαρμάκου εἴδει τὰ ψευδῆ τὰ ἐν δέοντι γενόμενα, medicinable lies or fictions, with a provisional or economised truth in them, set forth under such terms as simple

souls could best receive. Just here, at the end of the third book of *The Republic* he introduces such a fable: φοινικικὸν ψεῦδος, he calls it, a miner's story, about copper and silver and gold, such as may really have been current among the primitive inhabitants of the island from which metal and the art of working it had been introduced into Greece.

"And I shall try first of all to persuade the rulers themselves and our soldiers, and afterwards the rest of the community, as to the matter of the rearing and the education we gave them, that in fact it did but seem to happen with them, they seemed to experience all that, only as in dreams. They were then in very truth nourished and fashioned beneath the earth within, and the armour upon them and their equipment put together; and when they were perfectly wrought out the earth even their mother put them forth. Now, therefore, it is their duty to think concerning the land in which they are as of a mother, or foster-mother, and to protect it if any foe come against it, and to think of their fellow-citizens as being their brothers, born of the earth as they. All ye in the city, therefore, are brothers, we shall say to them proceeding with our story, but God, when he made you, mixed gold in the generation of those among you fit to be our kings, for which cause they are the most precious of all, and silver in those fit to be our guards; and in the husbandmen and all other handicraftsmen iron and brass. Forasmuch then as ye are all of one kindred, for the most part ye would beget offspring like to yourselves, but at times a silver child will come of one golden, and from the silver a child of gold, and so forth, interchangeably. To those who rule, then, first and above all God enjoins that of nothing shall they be so careful guardians, nothing shall they so earnestly regard, as the young children—what metal has been mixed to their hands in the souls of these. And if a child of their own be born with an alloy of iron or brass, they shall by no means have pity upon it, but, allotting unto it the value which befits its nature, they shall thrust it into the class of husbandmen or artisans. And if, again, of these a child be born with gold or silver in him, with due estimate they shall promote such to wardenship or to arms, inasmuch as an oracular say-

ing declares that the city is perished already when it has iron or brass to guard it. Can you suggest a way of getting them to believe this *mythus*?" *Republic*, 414.

Its application certainly is on the surface: the Lacedaemonian details also the military turn taken, the disinterestedness of the powerful, their monastic renunciation of what the world prizes most, above all the doctrine of a natural aristocracy with its "privileges and also its duties." Men are of simpler structure and capacities than you have fancied, Plato would assure us, and more decisively appointed to this rather than to that order of service. Nay, with the boldness proper to an idealist, he does not hesitate to represent them (that is the force of the *mythus*) as actually made of different stuff; and society, assuming a certain aristocratic humour in the nature of things, has for its business to sanction, safeguard, further promote it, by law.

The state therefore, if it is to be really a living creature will have, like the individual soul, those sensuous appetites which call the productive powers into action, and its armed conscience, and its far-reaching intellectual light: its industrial class, that is to say, its soldiers, its kings—the last, a kind of military monks, as you might think, on a distant view, their minds full of a kind of heavenly effulgence, yet superintending the labours of a large body of work-people in the town and the fields about it. Of the industrial or productive class, the artists and artisans, Plato speaks only in outline, but is significant in what he says; and enough remains of the actual fruits of Greek industry to enable us to complete his outline for ourselves, as we may also, by aid of Greek art, together with the words of Homer and Pindar, equip and realise the full character of the true Platonic "war-man" or knight; and again, through some later approximate instances, discern something of those extraordinary, half-divine, philosophic kings.

We must let industry then mean for Plato all it meant, would naturally mean, for a Greek, amid the busy spectacle of Athenian handicrafts. The "rule" of Plato, its precepts of temperance, proportion, economy, though designed primarily for its soldiers, and

its kings or archons, for the military and spiritual orders, would probably have been incumbent also in relaxed degree upon those who work with their hands; and we have but to walk through the classical department of the Louvre or the British Museum to be reminded how those qualities of temperance and the like did but enhance, could not chill or impoverish, the artistic genius of Greek workmen. In proportion to what we know of the minor handicrafts of Greece we shall find ourselves able to fill up, as the condition of everyday life in the streets of Plato's City of the Perfect, a picture of happy protected labour, "skilled" to the utmost degree in all its applications. Those who prosecute it will be allowed, as we may gather, in larger proportion than those who "watch," in silent thought or sword in hand, such animal liberties as seem natural and right, and are not really "illiberal," for those who labour all day with their bodies, though they too will have on them in their service some measure of the compulsion which shapes the action of our kings and soldiers to such effective music. With more or less of asceticism, of a "common life," among themselves, they will be the peculiar sphere of the virtue of temperance in the State, as being the entirely willing subjects of wholesome rule. They represent, as we saw, in the social organism, the bodily appetites of the individual, its converse with matter, in a perfect correspondence, if all be right there, with the conscience and with the reasonable soul in it. Labouring by system at the production of perfect swords, perfect lamps, perfect poems too, and a perfect coinage, such as we know, to enable them the more readily to exchange their produce (νόμισμα τῆς ἀλλαγῆς ἕνεκα) working perhaps in guilds and under rules to insure perfection in each specific craft, refining matter to the last degree, they would constitute the beautiful body of the State, in rightful service, like the copper and iron, the bronze and the steel, they manipulate so finely, to its beautiful soul—to its natural though hereditary aristocracy, its "golden" humanity, its kings, in whom Wisdom, the light, of a comprehensive *Synopsis*, indefectibly resides, and who, as being not merely its discursive or practical reason, but its faculty of contemplation likewise, will be also its priests, the medium of its worship, of its intercourse with the gods.

Between them, between that intellectual or spiritual order, those novel philosophic kings, and the productive class of the artists and artisans, moves the military order, as the sensitive armed conscience, the armed will, of the State, its executive power in the fullest sense of that term—a "standing army," as Plato supposes, recruited from a great hereditary caste born and bred to such functions, and certainly very different from the mere "militia" of actual Greek states, hastily summoned at need to military service from the fields and workshops. Remember that the veritable bravery also, as the philosopher sees it, is a form of that "knowledge," which in truth includes in itself all other virtues, all good things whatever; that it is a form of "right opinion," and has a kind of insight in it, a real apprehension of the occasion and its claims on one's courage, whether it is worth while to fight, and to what point. Platonic knighthood then will have in it something of the philosophy which resides in plenitude in the class above it, by which indeed this armed conscience of the State, the military order, is continuously enlightened, as we know the conscience of each one of us severally needs to be. And though Plato will not expect his fighting-men, like the Christian knight, like Saint Ranieri Gualberto, to forgive their enemies, yet, moving one degree out of the narrower circle of Greek habits, he does require them, in conformity with a certain Pan-Hellenic, a now fully realised *national* sense, which fills himself, to love the whole Greek race, to spare the foe, if he be Greek, the last horrors of war, to think of the soil, of the dead, of the arms and armour taken from them, with certain scruples of a natural piety.

As the knights share the dignity of the regal order, are in fact ultimately distinguished from it by degree rather than in kind, so they will be sharers also in its self-denying "rule." In common with it, they will observe a singular precept which forbids them so much as to come under the same roof with vessels or other objects wrought of gold or silver—they "who are most worthy of it," precisely because while "many iniquities have come from the world's coinage, *they* have gold in them undefiled." Yet again we are not to suppose in Platonic Greece—how could we indeed anywhere within the range of Greek conceptions?—anything rude,

uncomely, or unadorned. No one who reads carefully in this very book of *The Republic* those pages of criticism which concern art quite as much as poetry, a criticism which drives everywhere at a conscientious nicety of workmanship, will suppose that. If kings and knights never drink from vessels of silver or gold, their earthen cups and platters, we may be sure, would be what we can still see; and the iron armour on their bodies exquisitely fitted to them, to its purpose, with that peculiar beauty which such fitness secures. See them, then, moving, in perfect "Justice" or "Rightness," to their Dorian music, their so expressive plain-song, under the guidance of their natural leaders, those who can see and fore-see—of those who know.

That they may be one! If, like an individual soul, the state has attained its normal differentiation of parts, as with that also its vitality and effectiveness will be proportionate to the unity of those parts in their various single operations. The productive, the executive, the contemplative orders, respectively, like their psychological analogues, the senses, the will, and the intelligence, will be susceptible each of its own proper virtue or excellence, temperance, bravery, spiritual illumination. Only, let each work aright in its own order, and a fourth virtue will supervene upon their united perfections, the virtue or perfection of the organic whole as such. The Justice which Plato has been so long in search of will be manifest at last—that perfect οἰκειοπραγία, which will be also perfect co-operation. Oneness, unity, community, an absolute community of interests among fellow-citizens, *philadelphia*, over against the selfish ambition of those naturally ascendant, like Alcibiades or Crito, in that competition for office, for wealth and honours, which has rent Athens into factions ever breeding on themselves, the centripetal force *versus* all centrifugal forces on this situation, Plato, in the central books of *The Republic*, dwells untired, in all its variety of synonym and epithet, the conditions, the hazard and difficulty of its realisation, its analogies in art, in music, in practical life, like three strings of a lyre, or like one colossal person, the painted δῆμος or civic genius on the walls of a Greek town-house, or, again, like the consummate athlete whose body, with no superfluities, is the precise, the perfectly finished,

instrument of his will. Hence, at once cause and effect of such "seamless" unity, his paradoxical new law of property in the City of the Perfect—*mandatum novum*, a "new commandment," we might fairly call it—τὰ των φίλων κοινά. "And no one said that aught of the things he possessed was his own but they had all things common." Ah, you see! Put yourself in Plato's company, and inevitably, from time to time, he will seem to pass with you beyond the utmost horizon actually opened to him.

Upon the aristocratic class therefore, in its two divisions, the army and the church or hierarchy, so to speak, the "rule" of Plato-poverty, obedience, contemplation, will be incumbent in its fullest rigour. "Like hired servants in their own house," they may not seem very enviable persons, on first thoughts. But remember again that Plato's charge against things as they are is partly in a theoretic interest—the philosopher, the philosophic soul, loves unity, but finds it nowhere, neither in the State nor in its individual members: it is partly also practical, and of the hour. Divided Athens, divided Greece, like some big, lax, self-neglectful person would be an easy prey to any well-knit adversary really at unity in himself. It is by way of introducing a constringent principal into a mass of amorphic particles, that Plato proclaims that these *friends* will have all things in common; and, challenged by the questions of his companions in the dialogue to say how far he will be ready to go in the application of so paradoxical a rule, he braces himself to a surprising degree of consistency. How far then will Plato, a somewhat Machiavelian theorist, as you saw, and with something of "fixed" ideas about practical things, taking desperate means towards a somewhat exclusively conceived ideal of social well-being, be ready to go?

Now we have seen that the genuine citizens of his Perfect City will have much of monasticism, of the character of military monks, about them already, with their poverty, their obedience, their contemplative habit. And there is yet another indispensable condition of the monastic life. The great Pope Hildebrand, by the rule of celibacy, by making "regulars" to that extent of the secular clergy, succeeded, as many have thought, in his design of making them in very deed, soul and body, but parts of the corporate order

they belonged to; and what Plato is going to add to his rule of life, for the ἄρχοντες, who are to be φιλοπόλιδες, to love the corporate body they belong to better than themselves, is in its actual effects something very like a law of celibacy. Difficult, paradoxical, as he admits it to be, he is pressed on by his hearers, and by the natural force of his argument, reluctantly to declare that the rule of communism will apply to a man's ownership of his wife and children.

Observe! Plato proposes this singular modification of married life as an elevation or expansion of the family, but, it may be rightly objected, is, in truth, only colouring with names exclusively appropriate to the family, arrangements which will be a suppression of all those sentiments that naturally pertain to it. The wisdom of Plato would certainly deprive mothers of that privacy of affection, regarding which the wisdom of Solomon beamed forth, by sending all infants soon after birth to be reared in a common nursery, where the facts of their actual parentage would be carefully obliterated. The result, as he supposes, will be a common and universal parentage, sonship, brotherhood; but surely with but a shadowy realisation of the affections, the claims, of these relationships. It will involve a loss of differentiation in life, and be, as such, a movement backward, to a barbarous or merely animal grade of existence.

Τὰ τῶν φίλων κοινά—With this soft phrase, then, Plato would take away all those precious differences that come of our having a little space in things to do what one will or can with. The Platonic state in fact, with its extraordinary common marriages, would be dealing precisely after the manner of those who breed birds or dogs. A strange forbidding experiment, it seems, or should seem, to us, looking back on it in the light of laws now irrevocably fixed on these subjects by the judgment of the Christian church. We must remember however, in fairness, that Plato in this matter of the relation of the sexes especially, found himself in a world very different from ours, regulated and refined, as it already is in some degree, by Christian ideas about women and children. A loose law of marriage, beyond it concubinage in some degree sanctioned by religion, beyond that again morbid vice: such was the

condition of the Greek world. What Christian marriage, in harmonious action with man's true nature, has done to counteract this condition, that Plato tried to do by a somewhat forced legislation, which was altogether out of harmony with the facts of man's nature. Neither the church nor the world has endorsed his theories about it. Think, in contrast, of the place occupied in Christian art by the mother and her child. What that represents in life Plato wishes to take from us, though, as he would have us think, in our own behalf.

And his views of the community of male and female education, and of the functions of men and women in the State, do but come of the relief of women in large measure from home-duties. Such duties becoming a carefully economised department of the State, the women will have leisure to share the work of men; and will need a corresponding education. The details of their common life in peace and war he certainly makes effective and bright. But if we think of his proposal as a reinstatement of the Amazon we have in effect condemned it. For the Amazon of mythology and art is but a survival from a half-animal world, which Theseus, the embodiment of adult reason, had long since overcome.

Plato himself divides this confessedly so difficult question into two: Is the thing good? and in the second place, Is it possible? Let us admit that at that particular crisis, or even generally, what he proposes is for the best. Thereupon the question which suggested itself in regard to the community of goods recurs with double force: Where may lie the secret of the *magnanimity* (that is the term to hold by) which will make wealth and office, with all their opportunities for puissant wills, no motive in life at all? Is it possible, and under what conditions—this disinterestedness on the part of those who might do what they will as with their own, this indifference, this surrender, not of one's goods and time only, but of one's last resource, one's very home, for "the greatest happiness of the greatest number."—Those are almost the exact words of Plato. How shall those who might be egotists on the scale of an Alcibiades or an Alexander be kept to this strange "new mandate" of altruism? How shall a paradox so bold be brought within the range of possibilities? Well! by the realisation of another para-

dox—if we make philosophers our kings or our kings philosophers. It is the last "wave of paradox," from the advancing crest of which Plato still shrinks back, oddly reluctant, as we may think, to utter his whole mind. But, concede his position, and all beside, in the strange, paradoxical new world he is constructing, its extraordinary reaches of *philadelphia* will be found practicable.

Our kings must be philosophers. But not, we must carefully note, because, as people are apt to fancy, philosophers as such necessarily despise or are unable to feel what is fascinating in the world of action, are unformed or withered on one side, and, as regards the allurements of the world of sense, are but "corpses." For Plato certainly they are no starvelings. The philosophic, or aristocratic, or kingly, nature, as he conceives it, will be the perfect flower of the whole compass of natural endowments, promoted to the utmost by the artificial influences of society—καλοκαγαθός—capable therefore in the extreme degree of success in a purely "self-regarding" policy, of an exploitation, in their own interests, of all that men in general value most, to the surfeiting, if they cared, of their ambition, their vanity, their love of liberty or license.

Nor again must our kings be philosophers mainly because in such case the world will be very wisely, very knowingly, governed. Of course it would be well that wise men should rule. Even a Greek, still "a youth in the youth, of the world," who indeed was not very far gone from an essentially youthful evaluation of things, was still apt to think with Croesus that the richest must of course be the happiest of men, and to have a headache when compelled to think, even he would have taken so much for granted. That it would be well that wise men should govern, wise after the Platonic standard, bringing, that is to say, particular details under coherent general rules, able to foresee and influence the future by their knowledge of the past—there is no paradox in that: it belongs rather, you might complain, to the range of platitudes. But, remember! the hinge of Plato's whole political argument is, that the ruinous divisions of Athens, of Greece, of the entire social community, is the want of disinterestedness in its rulers; not that they are unfit to rule; rather, that they have often, it may be, a

natural call to office—those exceptional high natures—but that they "abound" therein exclusively "in their own sense." And the precise point of paradox in philosophic kingship, as Plato takes it, is this, that if we have philosophers for our kings, our archons, we shall be under a sort of rulers who as such have made sacrifice of themselves, and in coming to office at all must have taken upon them "the form of a servant:"

"For thus it is—If you can find out a life better than being a king, for those who shall bookings, a well-governed city will become possible, and not otherwise. For in that city alone will those be kings who are in very deed rich. But if poor men, hungering after their private good, proceed to public offices, it is not possible, for, the kingly office becoming an object of contention, the sort of battle which results, being at home and internal, destroys them, along with the commonwealth—Most truly, he replied—Have you then, I asked, any kind of life which can despise political offices, other than the life of true philosophers?—Certainly not—Yet still it is necessary that those who come to office should not be lovers of it: otherwise the rival lovers will fight—That must be so—Whom then will you compel to proceed to the guardianship of the city save those, who, being wisest of all in regard to the conditions of her highest welfare, are themselves possessed of privileges of another order, and a life better than the politician's?" *Republic*, 520.

More capable than others of an adroit application of all that power usually means in the way of personal advantage, your "legitimate," and really elect royalty or aristocracy must be secured from the love of it; you must insure their magnanimity in office by a counter-charm. But where is such a charm, or counter-charm, to be found? Throughout, as usual in so provident a writer as Plato, the answer to that leading question has had its prelude, even in the first book:

"Therefore it was, for my part, friend Thrasymachus, I was saying just now that no one would be willing of his own motion to

rule, and take in hand the ills of other people to set them right, but that he would ask a reward; because he who will do fairly by his art, or prosper by his art, never does what is best for himself, nor ordains that, in ordaining what is proper to his art, but what is best for the subject of his rule. By reason of which indeed, as it seems, there must needs be a reward for those who shall be willing to rule, either money, or honour, or a penalty unless he will rule—How do you mean this Socrates? said Glaucon: for the two rewards I understand, but the penalty, of which you speak, and have named as in the place of a reward, I do not understand—Then you do not understand, I said, the reward of the best, for the sake of which the most virtuous rule, when they are willing to rule. Or do you not know that the being fond of honours, fond of money, is said to be, and is, a disgrace?—For my part, Yes! he said—On this ground then, neither for money are the good willing to rule, nor for honour; for they choose neither, in openly exacting hire as a return for their rule, to be called hirelings, nor, in taking secretly therefrom, thieves. Nor again is it for honour they will rule, for they are not ambitious. Therefore it is, that necessity must be on them, and a penalty, if they are to be willing to rule: whence perhaps it has come, that to proceed with ready will to the office of ruler, and not to await compulsion, is accounted indecent. As for the penalty—the greatest penalty is to be ruled by one worse than oneself, unless one will rule. And it is through fear of that, the good seem to me to rule, when they rule: and then they proceed to the office of ruler, not as coming to some good thing, nor as to profit therein, but as to something unavoidable, and as having none better than themselves to whom to entrust it, nor even as good. Since it seems likely that if a city of good men came to be, not to rule would be the matter of contention, as nowadays to rule, and here it would become manifest that a ruler in very deed, in the nature of things, considers not what is profitable for himself, but for the subject of his rule. So that every intelligent person would choose rather to be benefited by another, than by benefiting another to have trouble himself." *Republic*, 346.

Now if philosophy really is where Plato consistently puts it, and is all he claims for it, then, for those capable of it, who are capable also in the region of practice, it will be precisely "that better thing than being a king for those who must be our kings, our archons." You see that the various elements of Platonism are interdependent; that they really cohere.

Just at this point then you must call to memory the greatness of the claim Plato makes for philosophy—a promise, you may perhaps think, larger than anything he has actually presented to his readers in the way of a philosophic revelation justifies. He seems, in fact, to promise all, or almost all, that in a later age natures great and high have certainly found in the Christian religion. If philosophy is only star-gazing, or only a condition of doubt, if what the sophist or the philistine says of it is all that can be said, it could hardly compete with the rewards which the vulgar world holds out to its servants. But for Plato, on the other hand, if philosophy is anything at all, it is nothing less than an "escape from the evils of the world," and ὁμοίωσις τῷ θεῷ, a being made like to God. It provides a satisfaction not for the intelligence only but for the whole nature of man, his imagination and faith, his affections, his capacity for religious devotion, and for some still unimagined development of the capacities of sense.

How could anything which belongs to the world of mere phenomenal change seem great to him who is "the spectator of all time and all existence?" "For the excellency" of such knowledge as that, we might say, he must "count all things but loss." By fear of punishment in some roundabout way, he might indeed be compelled to descend into "the cave," "to take in hand the wrongs of other people to set them right;" but of course the part he will take in your sorry exhibition of passing shadows, and dreamy echoes concerning them, will not be for himself. You may think him, that philosophic archon or king, who in consenting to be your master has really taken upon himself "the form of a servant"—you may think him, in our late age of philosophic disillusion, a wholly chimerical being. Yet history records one instance in which such a figure actually found his way to an imperial throne, and with a certain approach to the result Plato promises. It was precisely

because his whole being was filled with philosophic vision, that the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, that fond student or philosophy, of this very philosophy of Plato, served the Roman people so well in peace and war—with so much disinterestedness, because, in fact, so reluctantly. Look onward, and what is strange and inexplicable in his realisation of the Platonic scheme—strange, if we consider how cold and feeble after all were the rays of light on which he, waited so devoutly—becomes clear in the person of Saint Louis, who, again, precisely because his whole being was full of heavenly vision, in self-banishment from it for a while, led and ruled the French people so magnanimously alike in peace and war. The presence, then, the ascendancy amid actual things, of the royal or philosophic nature, as Plato thus conceives it—that, and nothing else, will be the generating force, the seed, of the City of the Perfect, as he conceives it: this place, in which the great things of existence, known or divined, really fill the soul. Only, he for one would not be surprised if no eyes actually see it. Like his master Socrates, as you know, he is something of a humorist; and if he sometimes surprises us with paradox or hazardous theory, will sometimes also give us to understand that he is after all not quite serious. So about this vision of the City of the Perfect, *The Republic*, Καλλίπολις, *Uranopolis*, *Utopia*, *Civitas Dei*, *The Kingdom of Heaven*—

"Suffer me, he says, to entertain myself as men of listless minds are wont to do when they journey alone. Such persons, I fancy, before they have found out in what way ought of what they desire may come to be, pass that question by lest they grow weary in considering whether the thing be possible or no; and supposing what they wish already achieved, they proceed at once to arrange all the rest, pleasing themselves in the tracing out all they will do, when that shall have come to pass—making a mind already idle idler still." *Republic*, 144.

Chapter Ten

Plato's Aesthetics

When we remember Plato as the great lover, what the visible world was to him, what a large place the idea of Beauty, with its almost adequate realisation in that visible world, holds in his most abstract speculations as the clearest instance of the relation of the human mind to reality and truth, we might think that art also, the fine arts, would have been much for him; that the esthetic element would be a significant one in his theory of morals and education. Τὰ τερπνὰ, ἐν Ἑλλάδι (to use Pindar's phrase) all the delightful things in Hellas—Plato least of all could have been unaffected by their presence around him. And so it is. Think what perfection of handicraft, what a subtle enjoyment therein, is involved in that specially Platonic rule, to mind one's business (τὸ τὰ αὑτοῦ πράττειν) that he who, like Fra Damiano of Bergamo, has a gift for ποικιλία, *intarsia* or *marqueterie*, for example, should confine himself exclusively to that. Before him, you know, there had been no theorising about the beautiful, its place in life, and the like; and as a matter of fact he is the earliest critic of the fine arts. He anticipates the modern notion that art as such has no end but its own perfection—"art for art's sake." Ἀρ'οὖν καὶ ἑκαστη των τεχνων ἔστι τι συμφέρον ἄλλο ἢ ὅτι μάλιστα τελέαν εἶναι; We have seen again that not in theory only, by the large place he assigns to our experiences regarding visible beauty in the formation of his doctrine of ideas, but that in the practical sphere also, this great fact of experience, the reality of beauty, has its importance with him. The loveliness of virtue as a harmony, the winning aspect of those "images" of the absolute and unseen Temperance, Bravery, Justice, shed around us in the visible world for eyes that can see, the claim of the virtues as a visible representa-

tion by human persons and their acts of the eternal qualities of "the eternal," after all far out-weigh, as he thinks, the claim of their mere utility. And accordingly, in education, all will begin and end in "music," in the promotion of qualities to which no truer name can be given than symmetry, aesthetic fitness, tone. Philosophy itself indeed, as he conceives it, is but the sympathetic appreciation of a kind of music in the very nature of things.

There have been Platonists without Plato, and a kind of traditional Platonism in the world, independent of, yet true in spirit to, the Platonism of the Platonic Dialogues. Now such a piece of traditional Platonism we find in the hypothesis of some close connexion between what may be called the aesthetic qualities of the world about us and the formation of moral character, between aesthetics and ethics. Wherever people have been inclined to lay stress on the colouring, for instance, cheerful or otherwise, of the walls of the room where children learn to read, as though that had something to do with the colouring of their minds; on the possible moral effect of the beautiful ancient buildings of some of our own schools and colleges; on the building of character, in any way, through the eye and ear; there the spirit of Plato has been understood to be, and rightly, even by those who have perhaps never read Plato's *Republic*, in which however we do find the connexion between moral character and matters of poetry and art strongly asserted. This is to be observed especially in the third and tenth books of *The Republic.* The main interest of those books lies in the fact, that in them we read what Plato actually said on a subject concerning which people have been so ready to put themselves under his authority.

It is said with immediate reference to metre and its various forms in verse, as an element in the general treatment of style or manner (λέξις) as opposed to the matter (λόγοι) in the imaginative literature, with which as in time past the education of the citizens of the Perfect City will begin. It is however at his own express suggestion that we may apply what he says, in the first instance, about metre and verse, to all forms of art whatever, to music (μουσική) generally, to all those matters over which the

Muses of Greek mythology preside, to all productions in which the *form* counts equally with, or for more than, the *matter*. Assuming therefore that we have here, in outline and tendency at least, the mind of Plato in regard to the ethical influence of aesthetic qualities, let us try to distinguish clearly the central lines of that tendency, of Platonism in art, as it is really to be found in Plato.

"You have perceived have you not," observes the Platonic Socrates, "that acts of imitation, if they begin in early life, and continue, establish themselves in one's nature and habits, alike as to the body, the tones of one's voice, the ways of one's mind."

Yes, that might seem a matter of common observation; and what is strictly Platonic here and in what follows is but the emphasis of the statement. Let us set it however, for the sake of decisive effect, in immediate connexion with certain other points of Plato's aesthetic doctrine.

Imitation then, imitation through the eye and ear, is irresistible in its influence over human; nature. And secondly, we, the founders, the people, of the Republic, of the city that shall be perfect, have for our peculiar purpose the simplification of human nature: a purpose somewhat costly, for it follows, thirdly, that the only kind of music, of art and poetry, we shall permit ourselves, our citizens, will be of a very austere character, under a sort of "self-denying ordinance." We shall be a fervently aesthetic community, if you will; but therewith also very fervent "renunciants," or ascetics.

In the first place, men's souls are, according to Plato's view, the creatures of what men see and hear. What would probably be found in a limited number only of sensitive people, a constant susceptibility to the aspects and other sensible qualities of things and persons, to the element of expression or form in them and their movements, to *phenomena* as such—this susceptibility Plato supposes in men generally. It is not so much the *matter* of a work of art, what is conveyed in and by colour and form and sound, that tells upon us educationally—the subject, for instance, developed by the words and scenery of a play—as *the form*, and its qualities, concision, simplicity, rhythm, or, contrariwise, abun-

dance, variety, discord. Such "aesthetic" qualities, by what we might call in logical phrase, μετάβασισ εἰς ἄλλο γένος, a derivation into another kind of matter, transform themselves, in the temper of the patient the hearer or spectator, into terms of ethics, into the sphere of the desires and the will, of the *moral* taste, engendering, nursing there, strictly moral effects, such conditions of sentiment and the will as Plato requires in his City of the Perfect, or quite the opposite, but hardly in any case indifferent, conditions.

Imitation—it enters into the very fastnesses of character; and we, our souls, ourselves, are for ever imitating what we see and hear, the forms, the sound which haunt our memories, our imagination. We imitate not only if we play a part on the stage but when we sit as spectators, while our thoughts follow the acting of another, when we read Homer and put ourselves, lightly, fluently, into the place of those he describes: we imitate unconsciously the line and colour of the walls around us, the trees by the wayside, the animals we pet or make use of, the very dress we wear. Only, Ἵνα μὴ ἑκ τῆς μιμήσεως τοῦ εἶναι ἀπολαύσωσιν—Let us beware how men attain the very truth of what they imitate.

That then is the first principle of Plato's aesthetics, his first consideration regarding the art of the City of the Perfect. Men, children, are susceptible beings, in great measure conditioned by the mere look of their "medium." Like those insects, we might fancy, of which naturalists tell us, taking colour from the plants they lodge on, they will come to match with much servility the aspects of the world about them.

But the people of the Perfect City would not be there at all except by way of a refuge, an experiment, or *tour de force*, in moral and social philosophy; and this circumstance determines the second constituent principle of Plato's aesthetic scheme. We, then, the founders, the citizens, of the Republic have a peculiar purpose. We are here to escape from, to resist, a certain vicious centrifugal tendency in life, in Greek and especially in Athenian life, which does but propagate a like vicious tendency in ourselves. We are to become—like little pieces in a machine! you may complain—No, like performers rather, individually, it may

be, of more or less importance, but each with a necessary and inalienable part, in a perfect musical exercise which is well worth while, or in some sacred liturgy; or like soldiers in an invincible army, invincible because it moves as one man. We are to find, or be put into, and keep, every one his natural place; to cultivate those qualities which will secure mastery over ourselves, the subordination of the parts to the whole, musical proportion. To this end, as we saw, Plato, a remorseless idealist, is ready even to suppress the differences of male and female character, to merge, to lose the family in the social aggregate.

Imitation then, we may resume, imitation through the eye and ear, is irresistible in its influence on human nature. Secondly, the founders of the Republic are by its very purpose bound to the simplification of human nature: and our practical conclusion follows in logical order. We shall make, and sternly keep, a "self-denying" ordinance in this matter, in the matter of art, of poetry, of taste in all its varieties; a rule, of which Plato's own words, applied by him in the first instance to rhythm or metre, but like all he says on that subject fairly applicable to the whole range of musical or aesthetic effects, will be the brief summary: *Alternations will be few and far between*—how differently from the methods of the poetry, the art, the choruses, we most of us love so much, not necessarily because our senses are inapt or untrained—Σμικραὶ αἱ μεταβολαί. We shall allow no musical innovations, no Aristophanic cries, no imitations however clever of "the sounds of the flute or the lyre," no free imitation by the human voice of bestial or mechanical sounds, no such artists as are "like a mirror turning all about." There were vulgarities of nature, you see, in the youth of ideal Athens even. Time, of course, as such, is itself a kind of artist, trimming pleasantly for us what survives of the rude world of the past. Now Plato's method would promote or anticipate the work of time in that matter of vulgarities of taste. Yes, when you read his precautionary rules, you become fully aware that even in Athens there were young men who affected what was least fortunate in the habits, the pleasures, the sordid business of the class below them. But they would not be allowed quite their own way in the streets or elsewhere in a reformed world,

to whose chosen imperial youth (βασιλικὴ φυλή) it would not be permitted even to think of any of those things—οὐδενὶ προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν. To them, what was illiberal, the illiberal crafts, would be (thanks to their well-trained power of intellectual abstraction!) as though it were not. And if art, like law, be, as Plato thinks, "a creation of mind, in accordance with right reason," we shall not wish our boys to sing like mere birds.

Yet what price would not the musical connoisseur pay to handle the instruments we may see in fancy passing out through the gates of the City of the Perfect, banished, not because there is no one within its walls who knows the use of, or would receive pleasure from, them (a delicate susceptibility in these matters Plato, as was said, presupposes) but precisely because they are so seductive, must be conveyed therefore to some other essentially less favoured neighbourhood, like poison, say! moral poison, for one's enemies' water-springs. A whole class of painters, sculptors, skilled workmen of various kinds go into like banishment-they and their very tools; not, observe again carefully, because they are bad artists, but very good ones—Ἀλλὰ μήν, ὦ Ἀδείμαντε, ἡδύς γε καὶ ὁ κεκραμένος. Art, as such, as Plato knows, has no purpose but itself, its own perfection. The proper art of the Perfect City is in fact the art of discipline Music (μουσική) all the various forms of fine art, will be but the instruments of its one overmastering social or political purpose, irresistibly conforming its so imitative subject units to type: they will be neither more nor less than so many variations, so to speak, of the trumpet-call.

Or suppose again that a poet finds his way to us, able by his genius, as he chooses, or as his audience chooses, to become all things, or all persons, in turn, and able to transform us too into all things and persons in turn, as we listen or read, with a fluidity, a versatility of humour almost equal to his own, a poet myriad-minded, as we say, almost in Plato's precise words, as our finest touch of praise, of Shakespeare for instance, or of Homer, of whom he was thinking—Well! we shall have been set on our guard. We have no room for him. Divine, delightful, being, "if he came to our city with his works, his poems, wishing to make an exhibition of them, we should certainly do him reverence as an object, sa-

cred, wonderful, delightful, but we should not let him stay. We should tell him that there neither is, nor may be, any one like that among us, and so send him on his way to some other city, having anointed his head with myrrh and crowned him with a garland of wool, as something in himself half-divine, and for ourselves should make use of some more austere and less pleasing sort of poet, for his practical uses"—Τῷ αὐστηροτέρῳ καὶ ἀηδεστέρῳ ποιητῇ, ὠφελίας ἕνεκα. Not, as I said, that the Republic any more than Lacedaemon will be an artless place. Plato's aesthetic scheme is actually based on a high degree of sensibility to such influences in the people he is dealing with—

"Right speech, then, and rightness of harmony and form and rhythm minister to goodness of nature; not that good-nature which we so call with a soft name, being really silliness, but the frame of mind which in very truth is rightly and fairly ordered in regard to the moral habit—Most certainly he said—Must not these qualities, then, be everywhere pursued by the young men if they are to do each his own business?—Pursued, certainly—Now painting, I suppose, is full of them (those qualities which are partly ethical, partly aesthetic) and all handicraft such as that; the weaver's art is full of them, and the inlayer's art and the building of houses, and the working of all the other apparatus of life; moreover the nature of our own bodies, and of all other living things. For in all these, rightness or wrongness of form is inherent. And wrongness of form, and the lack of rhythm, the lack of harmony, are fraternal to faultiness of mind and character, and the opposite qualities to the opposite condition—the temperate and good character—fraternal, aye! and copies of them—Yes, entirely so: he said—

Must our poets, then, alone be under control, and compelled to work the image of the good into their poetic works, or not to work among us at all; or must the other craftsmen too be controlled, and restrained from working this faultiness and intemperance and illiberality and formlessness of character whether into the images of living creatures, or the houses they build, or any other product of their craft whatever, or must he who is unable so to do be forbidden to practise his art among us, to the end that our guardians

may not, nurtured in images of vice as in a vicious pasture, cropping and culling much every day little by little from many sources, composing together some one great evil in their own souls, go undetected? Must we not rather seek for those craftsmen who have the power, by way of their own natural virtue, to track out thy nature of the beautiful and seemly, to the end that, living as in some wholesome place, the young men may receive good from every side, whencesoever, from fair works of art, either upon sight or upon hearing anything may strike, as it were a breeze bearing health from kindly places, and from childhood straightway bring them unaware to likeness and friendship and harmony with fair reason?—Yes: he answered: in this way they would be by far best educated—Well then, I said, Glaucon, on these grounds is not education in music of the greatest importance—because, more than anything else, rhythm and harmony make their way down into the inmost part of the soul, and take hold upon it with the utmost force, bringing with them rightness of form, and rendering its form right, if one be correctly trained; if not, the opposite? and again because he who has been trained in that department duly, would have the sharpest sense of oversights and of things not fairly turned out, whether by art or nature (μὴ καλως δημιουργηθέντων ἢ μὴ καλως φύντων) and disliking them, as he should, would commend things beautiful, and, by reason of his delight in these, receiving them into his soul, be nurtured of them, and become καλοκαγαθός, while he blamed the base, as he should, and hated it, while still young, before he was able to apprehend a reason, and when reason comes would welcome it, recognising it by its kinship to himself—most of all one thus taught?—Yes: he answered: it seems to me that for reasons such as these their education should be in music." *Republic*, 400.

Understand, then, the poetry and music, the arts and crafts, of the City of the Perfect—what is left of them there, and remember how the Greeks themselves were used to say that "the half is more than the whole." Liken its music, if you will, to Gregorian music, and call to mind the kind of architecture, military or monastic again, that must be built to such music, and then the kind of

colouring that will fill its jealously allotted space upon the walls, the sort of carving that will venture to display itself on cornice or capital. The walls, the pillars, the streets—you see them in thought! nay, the very trees and animals, the attire of those who move along the streets, their looks and voices, their style—the hieratic Dorian architecture, to speak precisely, the Dorian manner everywhere, in possession of the whole of life. Compare it, for further vividness of effect, to Gothic building, to the Cistercian Gothic, if you will, when Saint Bernard had purged it of a still barbaric superfluity of ornament. It seems a long way from the Parthenon to Saint Ouen "of the aisles and arches," or *Notre-Dame de Bourges*; yet they illustrate almost equally the direction of the Platonic aesthetics. Those churches of the Middle Age have, as we all feel, their loveliness, yet of a stern sort, which fascinates while perhaps it repels us. We may try hard to like as well or better architecture of a more or less different kind, but coming back to them again find that the secret of final success is theirs. The rigid logic of their charm controls our taste, as logic proper binds the intelligence: we would have something of that quality, if we might, for ourselves, in what we do or make; feel, under its influence, very diffident of our own loose, or gaudy, or literally insignificant, decorations. "Stay then," says the Platonist, too sanguine perhaps—"Abide," he says to youth, "in these places, and the like of them, and mechanically, irresistibly, the soul of them will impregnate yours. With whatever beside is in congruity with them in the order of hearing and sight, they will tell (despite, it may be, of unkindly nature at your first making) upon your very countenance, your walk and gestures, in the course and concatenation of your inmost thoughts."

And equation being duly made of what is merely personal and temporary in Plato's view of the arts, it may be salutary to return from time to time to the Platonic aesthetics, to find ourselves under the more exclusive influence of those qualities in the Hellenic genius he has thus emphasised. What he would promote, then, is the art, the literature, of which among other things it may be said that it solicits a certain effort from the reader or spectator, who is

promised a great expressiveness on the part of the writer, the artist, if he for his part will bring with him a great attentiveness. And how satisfying, how reassuring, how flattering to himself after all, such work really is—the work which deals with one as a scholar, formed, mature and manly. Bravery—ἀνδρεία, or manliness—manliness and temperance, as we know, were the two characteristic virtues of that old pagan world; and in art certainly they seem to be involved in one another. Manliness in art, what can it be, as distinct from that which in opposition to it must be called the feminine quality there—what but a full conciousness of what one does, of art itself in the work of art, tenacity of intuition and of consequent purpose, the spirit of construction as opposed to what is literally incoherent or ready to fall to pieces, and, in opposition to what is hysteric or works at random, the maintenance of a standard. Of such art ἦθος rather than πάθος will be the predominant mood. To use Plato's own expression there will be here no παραλειπόμενα, no "negligences," no feminine forgetfulness of one's self, nothing in the work of art unconformed to the leading intention of the artist, who will but increase his power by reserve. An artist of that kind will be apt, of course, to express more than he seems actually to say. He economises. He will not spoil good things by exaggeration. The rough, promiscuous wealth of nature he reduces to grace and order: reduces, it may be, lax verse to staid and temperate prose. With him, the rhythm, the music, the notes, will be felt to follow, or rather literally accompany as ministers, the sense—ἀκολουθεῖν τὸν λόγον.

We may fairly prefer the broad daylight of Veronese to the contrasted light and shade of Rembrandt even; and a painter will tell you that the former is actually more difficult to attain. Temperance, the temperance of the youthful Charmides, super-induced on a nature originally rich and impassioned—Plato's own native preference for that is only reinforced by the special needs of his time, and the very conditions of the ideal state. The diamond, we are told, if it be a fine one, may gain in value by what is cut away. It was after such fashion that the manly youth of Lacedaemon had been cut and carved. Lenten or monastic colours, brown and black, white and grey, give their utmost value for the eye (so much is

obvious) to the scarlet flower, the lighted candle, the cloth of gold. And Platonic aesthetics, remember! as such, are ever in close connexion with Plato's ethics. It is life itself, action and character, he proposes to colour; to get something of that irrepressible conscience of art, that spirit of control, into the general course of life, above all into its energetic or impassioned acts.

Such Platonic quality you may trace of course not only in work of Doric, or, more largely, of Hellenic lineage, but at all times, as the very conscience of art, its saving salt, even in ages of decadence. You may analyse it, as a condition of literary style, in historic narrative, for instance; and then you have the stringent, shorthand art of Thucydides at his best, his masterly feeling for master-facts, and the half as so much more than the whole. Pindar is in a certain sense his analogue in verse. Think of the amount of attention he must have looked for, in those who were, not to read, but to sing him, or to listen while he was sung, and to understand. With those fine, sharp-cut gems or chasings of his, so sparely set, how much he leaves for a well-drilled intelligence to supply in the way of connecting thought.

And you may look for the correlative of that in Greek clay, in Greek marble, as you walk through the British Museum. But observe it, above all, at work, checking yet reinforcing his naturally fluent and luxuriant genius, in Plato himself. His prose is a practical illustration of the value of that capacity for correction, of the effort, the intellectual astringency, which he demands of the poet also, the musician, of all true citizens of the ideal Republic, enhancing the sense of power in one's self, and its effect upon others, by a certain crafty reserve in its exercise, after the manner of a true expert. Χαλεπὰ τὰ καλά—he is faithful to the old Greek saying. Patience, "infinite patience," may or may not be, as was said, of the very essence of genius; but is certainly, quite as much as fire, of the mood of all true lovers, Ἴσως τὸ λεγόμενον ἀληθές, ὅτι χαλεπὰ τὰ καλά. Heraclitus had preferred the "dry soul," or the "dry light" in it, as Bacon after him the *siccum lumen.* And the dry beauty—let Plato teach us, to love that also, duly.

1891-1892.

Notes

[1] Or to Mr. Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy*; which I have read since these pages went to press, with much admiration for its learning and lucidity, and its unconventionality of view.

[2] Ταὐτὸν πανταχοῦ εἶδος–ὅλον καὶ ὑγιές–ἓν κατὰ πάντων, διὰ πάντων, ἐπὶ πᾶσι–καθ'ὅλου.

[3] *Essay*—"A loose sally of the mind," says Johnson's Dictionary. Bailey's earlier Dictionary gives another suggestive use of the word "among miners"—*A little trench or hole, which they dig to search for ore*.

[4] Σκέψασθαι καὶ συζητῆσαι ὅτι πότε ἔστιν· καί, τάχ' ἄν, παρ' ἄλληλα σκοποῦντες, κατρίβοντες, ὥσπερ ἐκ πυρείων, ἐκλάμψαι ποιήσαιμεν τὴν δικαιοσύνην.

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